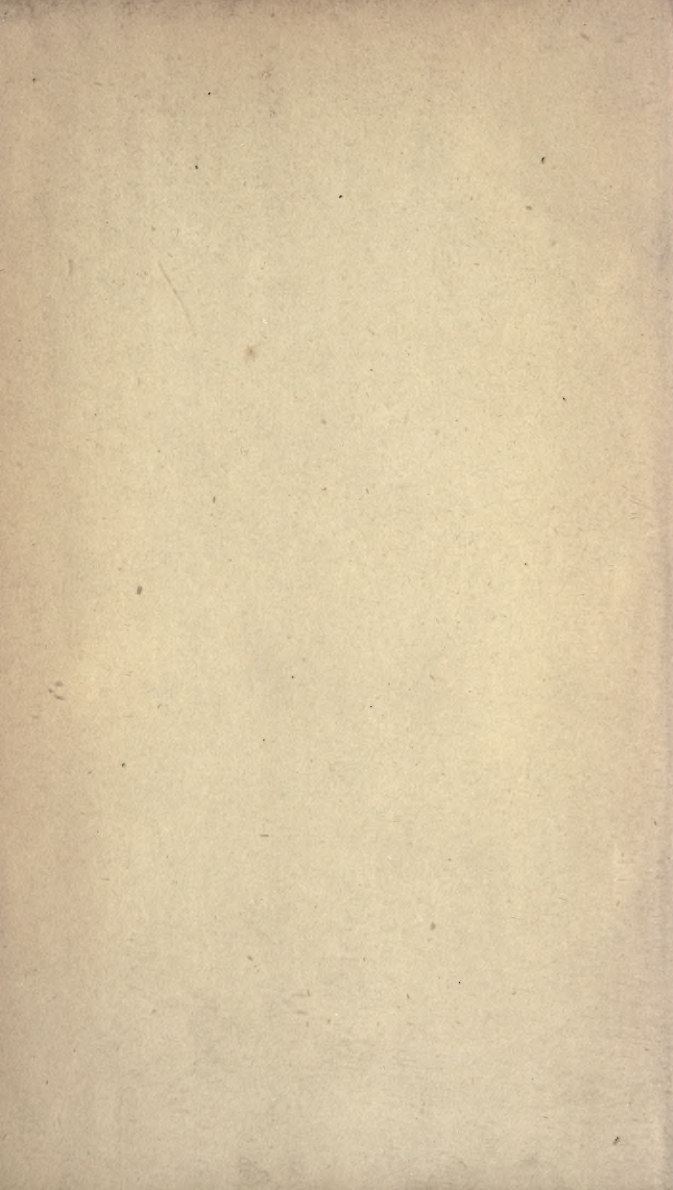


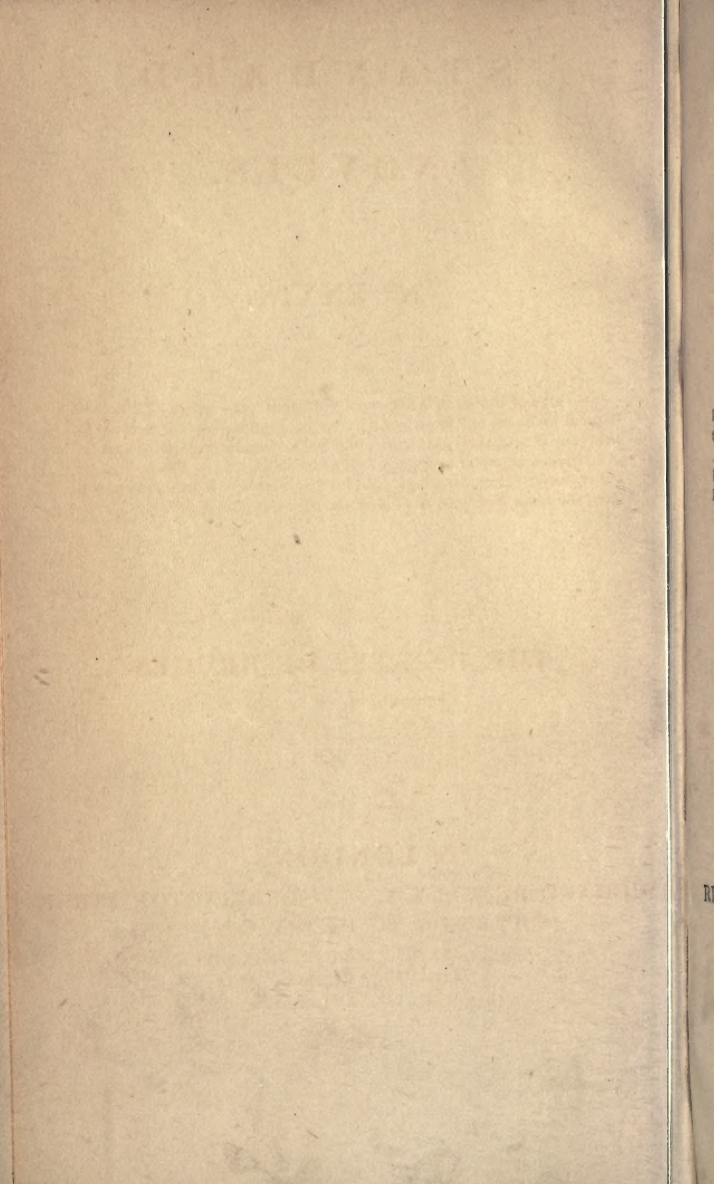




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NOVELS.

N° XXXIX.

"No kind of literature is so generally attractive as Fiction. Pictures of life and manners, and Stories of adventure, are more eagerly received by the many than graver productions, however important these latter may be. APULÉIUS is better remembered by his fable of Cupid and Psyche than by his abstruser Platonic writings; and the Decameron of BOCCACCIO has outlived the Latin Treatises, and other learned works of that author."

THE HEIRESS OF BRUGES.

COMPLETE IN ONE VOLUME.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, 8. NEW BURLINGTON STREET
(SUCCESSOR TO HENRY COLBURN):

BELL AND BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH;
CUMMING, DUBLIN; AND
GALIGNANI, PARIS.

1834.



F. Pickering, pinx.

H. Rolis, sculpt.

THE HEIRESS OF BRUGES.

*He folded his arms, and stood with a full front
facing the castle, braving the iron shower of
death which his heart now throbbed for.*

London, Published by Richard Bentley, 1834.

THE HEIRESS OF BRUGES:

A TALE.

BY

T. C. GRATTAN, ESQ.



He was surprised to find that the instrument, at the very first stroke, penetrated through every obstruction, and sunk, half handle deep into a cavity.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY,

(SUCCESSOR TO H. COLBURN)

CUMMING, DUBLIN—BELL & BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH,

GALIGNANI, PARIS.

1834.

RELIGIOUS OF HUNGARY

1848

THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

RICHARD HEATON

THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

THE HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION

THE
HEIRESS OF BRUGES;

A TALE.

BY
THOMAS COLLEY GRATTAN,

AUTHOR OF

"JACQUELINE OF HOLLAND," "HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS,"
&c.

Alasse, alasse ! what a thing Love is ; why it is like to an ostry faggot, that,
once set on fire, is as hardly to be quenched as the bird crocodill driven out
of her nest.

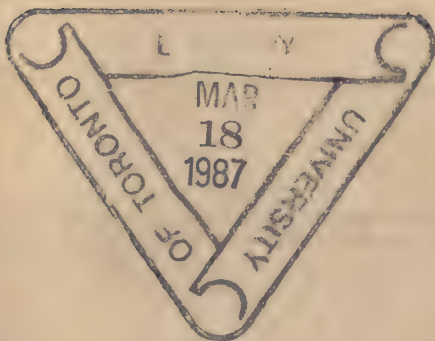
LODGE AND GREEN.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, 8. NEW BURLINGTON STREET
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BELL AND BRADFUTE, EDINBURGH;
CUMMING, DUBLIN; AND
GALIGNANI, PARIS.

1834.



THE
HEIRESS OF BRUGES.

CHAPTER I.

THERE is scarcely any where a town that presents so many points of quiet beauty as Bruges. Its aspect is soothing rather than striking. The memory of old times seems to rest upon the place, undisturbed by innovation or caprice. Recollections of splendour and refinement are unmingled with associations of feudal harshness; while fancy conjures up and embodies the spirit of chivalry in the garb of pure romance.

The town may be broken, as it were, into innumerable fragments. Each street, canal, and square offers several distinct pictures; but the most pleasing is undoubtedly that from Rozenhoed Quay. It is somewhat strange that even the inhabitants of the quay in question can give no satisfactory derivation for its name. The most common notion is, that the place was so called from having been, for days beyond counting, a chosen spot for the sale of little religious images worn by the lower orders, and specially of the rude rosaries called *Roosenhoedje*. The French, during their possession of the country, scorning this etymology, christened it the "*Rue des Roses*," a sentimental approach to the pronunciation of the unexplained word, and somewhat warranted from the close neighbourhood of the flower-market. But under the present government it has recovered its ancient name, and is at present thus alone distinguished.

It is well, however, for those who value such obscure concerns, that records exist to prove the real origin of this title. The quay was, in fact, built by, and called after, a citizen of

some celebrity, between two and three centuries back, Siger Van Rozenhoed ; whose best chance with posterity (like the father of Charlemagne) would have been to have had his tombstone engraven with the name of his child — after this fashion : —

“ Here lies the Father of Theresa Van Rozenhoed.”

We may not now trace the citizen's real epitaph ; for the cemetery in which he was buried was totally defaced, by unsympathising improvers, many a year ago ; when mausoleums and tombstones were alike demolished, and with them all the fame conferred by the stonecutter's chisel. But Van Rozenhoed derived his from a better source — his own talents ; and he did, in truth, and for his own sake alone, merit a monument more lasting than either stone or brass.

Siger Roozen was by trade a goldbeater ; and, in the year 1580, inhabited that quarter of the town which stretches northward, from the great square to the Asses' Gate *, at that time a straggling extent, containing several close and ill-built streets, with gardens and orchards intermixed, the houses being either of wood, or preposterous specimens of the worst style of architecture, and then almost all tumbling into decay. The one occupied by Siger Roozen was one of the oldest and most dilapidated. It threatened death and burial at the same time to any one venturous enough to become its tenant ; but the hardihood of Siger Roozen braved the danger, for the advantage of possessing in imagination a mansion of a hundred chambers. Such had once been the one in question, as was evidenced by some rotten beams and rafters, with sundry marks against the walls, roofs, and ceilings, of what was, a century before, the still inhabited remains of a splendid palace. It had been constructed by the last representative of the noble family of Savenslacht, who was massacred, with many other men of rank, by the rebellious citizens, under the very eyes of their captive sovereign, Count Louis de Creci, in the year 1325. The family became extinct in the person of this unfortunate victim ; and his large possessions and new-built palace being confiscated, descended through several generations of strangers to his race. These possessors had none of the

* So called, it is believed by the native antiquarians, from the number of these animals used by the country people coming to market.

sympathy of family pride to preserve in tact the integrity of the estate, or keep up the unwieldy splendour of the mansion. The first was accordingly sold, resold, and subdivided; the latter crumbled away, moulding by moulding, cornice by cornice, wing by wing, galleries, corridors, and parlours; till at length, in less than three hundred years from its erection, it became a desert shell of bare and weather-beaten walls, enclosing a mass of ruin and rubbish, and affording but a little corner nook, supported over one of the vast cellars, in which the poor and houseless goldbeater secured a shelter from the storms of the sky and the world.

Life had been up to this period a hard trial for Siger. He had held a long tussle with poverty and ill luck; and he never dreamt of being able one day to put his foot on their low-bent necks. But he indulged in, without knowing from whence they arose, long reveries of wealth and grandeur. He used often to look up at the ruin which sheltered him, or gaze from some jutting stone into the void of its wide area, and pace, in fancy, saloons and halls of renovated splendour. He sometimes rubbed his eyes, in hopes of their opening again on realities; and always turned away with a sigh for these illusive minutes, which were worth an age of his every-day life. Even in his sober hours, when the ding of his hammer told him where and what he was, he used to start at the notion that he had freed the prisoned spirit of the metal by his strokes, and that it hovered round him in grateful guardianship. Marveling at these strange vagaries of imagination, he would ask himself what could have put them into his brain? But he never could solve this oft-repeated question; and never understood that his visions arose from the fumes of a dormant ambition, thus constantly giving notice of an existence which only waited for an excitement to be fully developed.

Siger Roozen was, in fact, a man of circumstances — not a man to make them. His impulses, feelings, and passions, though all integral parts of an energetic combination, required events to draw them out. Had he been a man of *genius*, these elements would have created events, instead of following them. But as it was, he was only a strong-minded, clever fellow, prompt to seize on and turn to the best account whatever might offer itself to his purpose.

He was about thirty years of age when he secured the refuge just described, and he continued in its unrestricted occupation for several months. Siger, whose mind was at once active and speculative, amused himself in his leisure hours, when his hammer was laid at rest, in clearing away a little plot of garden ground, close to the remains of an octagonal pavilion which had tumbled, like the mansion, into premature decay. He worked for several days, with pickaxe and shovel, clearing away the rubbish. One or two stragglers, who saw his work, and did not comprehend the possibility of redeeming sufficient of the soil to form a turnip bed, soon set the report afloat that poor Siger Roozen, sick of life, was about to put an end to it, and was digging his own grave. But his intentions were still more profound ; and he soon satisfied his inquisitive neighbours that his object was to make life itself more palatable, by being enabled to add, at a small expense, a few pot-herbs to his soup, or a relish of parsnips to his Friday's dinner of salt stock-fish. This candid explanation of his motives relieved him from all the troublesome effects of curiosity. He was allowed to delve at his daily task without further observation ; and well it was for him that he was not observed.

It was about the sixth or seventh evening of his labour, that, having returned from his master's workshop, and taken the shovel once more in hand, to clear away the last of the fragments of stone and brick which had impeded his progress, he was surprised to find that the instrument, at the very first stroke, penetrated through every obstruction, and sunk, half handle up, into a cavity, the bottom of which it did not touch. Siger started back, as if an earthquake had gaped before him. But he recovered himself in a moment or two ; looked round wistfully, to be sure that he was unnoticed ; and returned to his work, with a quicker throbbing of the heart than seemed justified by the occasion ; but it was caused by a vague sensation of hope, the extent of which was not known even to himself. Custom had by no means extinguished the dreamy thoughts which had taken possession of Siger's mind, from the very first day he had fixed himself in the skeleton remains of Savenslacht House. He made it his abode, with a vapoury notion of he knew not what, but something like that which makes the holder of a lottery ticket calculate (or

at least speculate), in his own despite, on all possibilities, probabilities, and chances.

Judicial astrology, alchymy, and their concomitant absurdities, still lingered at this period in the belief of many people ; and the Low Countries were, in particular, the stronghold to which they retired, as they were driven out from the popular credulity of other nations. The discovery of the new world, and the successes of the first adventurers, had turned the hopes of gain into channels of greater certainty ; and the vulgar abandoned by degrees the star-gazing philosophers, and listened with all their ears for the chink of trans-Atlantic gold. Had Siger Roozen been an educated man, he, no doubt, like many others, would have prostituted his knowledge in the pursuits of alchymy, for he loved the precious metal in his heart. But being unlearned, he could only hammer it in the practice of his trade, and long for it in his leisure hours. He had lately entertained some serious thoughts of going to the Indies, or to the new-found world, without any settled purport beyond that of finding an El Dorado, if he could, or stretching out his arms, like the maiden of the mythology, for any shower of gold which might fall. Something, however, kept Siger steady to his native town ; and that something was merely a want of enterprise ; though the result of his present adventure convinced *him* it was little less than an inspiration.

We left him a few minutes ago, returned to his labours of excavation, and we may now imagine him embowelled in the earth, nearly shoulder deep, groping curiously with the extended shovel ; his footing steady at bottom of the cavity, but his head swimming, with mixed sensations of hope and apprehension. He at every moment expected to feel his instrument strike against an iron chest, or some hoard of secret treasure, as certainly as though it had been directed by a divining rod. At length, and after near an hour's continued delving in the extensive cavity, the shovel did come in contact with some object that felt different from any thing it had before struck against, and unlike those of our labourer's anticipations. It was a hard body in a soft covering. Siger threw down the shovel, and stooping low, he felt the material with trembling hand, and ascertained that it was neither more nor less than an old sack, of a texture originally coarse as well as strong.

His fingers instinctively dabbled in every fold and crevice of the canvass ; but he could not by this means discover the nature of its contents. Once more throwing a cautious glance above him, and being again assured that the twilight shades concealed no witness to his discovery, he resolved to lift the sack in his arms, heavy as it was, and drag it, for secret inspection, into the furthest corner of the vault, where the faint light from above could barely serve, without betraying his purpose. He accordingly raised it up bodily, and with considerable effort ; but the pressure of its weighty contents against the opening burst the rotten ligaments which bound it, as well as the worn out stuff of which it was made ; and from its many apertures an actual flood of treasure poured out, at the feet of the amazed and bewildered man. Siger, slipping his hold of the sack, let the torn fragments fall with their discharged contents ; and he stood for some seconds, with straining eyes and reeling brain, gazing on the floor of the vault, which gave a literal representation of the strand in the Faery Queen,

“ Bestrewed all with rich array,
Of pearls and precious stones of great assay ;
And all the gravel mix'd with golden ore.”

Siger could never recollect how long he stood thus fixed ; for when he came to his recollection, he found himself stretched upon the heap of wealth, cold and benumbed, the moon shining down into the vault. He knew not whether (as is most probable) he had lain in waking reverie, or swooned from excess of wonderment and happiness.

The first instinct of recovered sense made him nervously grasp whole handfuls of the coin and jewels. His next feeling was anxiety to be assured that he was still alone ; and he started on his feet, and looked up into the garden. Although again satisfied on this point, he still dreaded interruption ; and, urged by impulse more than reason, he began to scrape over a quantity of sand and rubbish, until he had completely reburied the whole mass of treasure. He then cautiously emerged from the place ; and creeping along by the walls and through the tangled shrubs, he gained his hovel. There, however, he could not rest. The hum of street noises filled him with uneasiness ; and the lights in the neighbouring houses made him fancy every inhabitant on the watch to seize upon his treasure. He grasped the first, indeed the only,

weapon he had at hand — the hammer of his trade ; and with his nerves rigidly wound up for a desperate defence against all assailants, he again repaired to the pavilion, and there kept constant watch during the whole night ; nor left his post till the broad daylight convinced him that his remaining on the spot was in itself as suspicious as it was unnecessary.

For two days more did Siger suffer tortures of the most various kinds. He feared to return to his secret hoard — he dreaded to quit the place for a moment ; slunk in and out, when he sought each poor repast, with the air of a thief, instead of the swagger of a rich man — sat watching by day from his nook, and prowled at night in the garden close to the spot which contained the hoard, which he panted once more to gloat over, yet dared not. His thirty years of poverty had been bliss, in comparison with his three days of wealth. He had all the suffering of a miser without any of his enjoyment ; and he feared at times, with the superstition of his character and that of the age, that some fiend had played him a trick of mere delusion ; or, supposing the whole affair to be real, that some other might spirit away the treasure into the gaping depths of the earth.

Siger, however, did not long bend under these apprehensions, so degrading to a man of his natural strength of mind. The first shock of this sudden change gone by, he recovered himself sooner, perhaps, than most other men would have done, after such a metamorphosis ; for, in fact, one accustomed all his life to crawl close to the earth might well require some preparation, before he could stand erect, and go on two legs. Frequent visits to the vault were now boldly undertaken by day, as well as at night ; and Siger divided his treasures into various parcels, which he carefully buried in several parts of the premises that held no attraction to intruders. He began to walk more boldly in the streets, as he passed to and fro ; and ventured to offer a couple of the larger coins for exchange, merely averring that he had found them. He had a tolerable notion of their value, and was not cheated, but made a dexterous show of anxiety about the merest trifle, to remove any chance of suspicion, which an air of indifference might have excited. But he was all the while convinced that he was the actual possessor of almost boundless wealth. The very gold in coins, ornaments, and articles of plate, he saw to be of

great value. He was afraid to calculate the worth of the jewels; arithmetic seemed to want numbers to complete the reckoning, and his head turned whenever he made the attempt.

His first purchase was a new suit of clothes. His fustian jerkin was flung aside for a doublet of green plush, with a pair of breeches of the same stuff. A short cloak of grey cloth was thrown across his shoulders; a beaver hat, with its broad leaf turned up at one side, graced his head. He wore a somewhat coarse, but well stiffened ruff, after the fashion which the Spaniards had introduced into the Low Countries. He drew on a pair of dark blue hose, with red worked clocks, fastened his broad-toed shoes with rosettes to match the hose; and stepped forth, the Sunday next but one after his discovery, a specimen of a good-looking and well-dressed tradesman of the still wealthy town he inhabited.

As he sallied out of the ruined porch of his retreat, the neighbours stood forth from their dwellings to stare at him; uncoiffed heads were thrust from the windows — the children left off play — the very curs seemed to look involuntary respect — caps were doffed, and salutations proffered — and every one seemed to acknowledge the influence of externals, on the principle of a quaint English writer of about that very time: — “The body being the shell of the soul, apparel the huske of that shell; the huske often telling you what the kernel is.”

Carelessly returning the civilities of his neighbours, Siger passed on, with a buoyant heart and light step, across the open garden ground that sloped down to the Canal of the Lion. He there crossed the two old planks which did loose service to the passers, the only remnant of a wooden bridge built in the thirteenth century, and which had taken its own name, and given that of the canal, from two clumsy lions, that grinned in old oak from its battlements. As Siger placed his foremost foot on these planks, it slipped through the interstice into the water; upon which, he piously knelt down, unmindful of his new breeches, and made a vow to build a bridge on the spot, and to dedicate it to St. James, the patron saint of the parish. Rising again, and turning to the left, he entered a shop of small dimensions, by the door of which hung the brazen dish with indented edge, the universal sign of a barber

in all civilised countries. There did Siger undergo the pleasant operation of having his beard trimmed and pointed; and having his toilette thus complete, he entered, with an air of decorous humility, into the church of St. James, just opposite.

As soon as mass was ended, Siger left the church, with the soothing reflection of having gone through his morning duty, at least in form. He now moved quickly onwards, without further hinderance, across the great square; turned to the left again, unmindful of the *carillon* which was loudly pealing above him, and soon traversing the smaller square called the Bourg, looking with a mixture of deference and self-confidence at the palace of the counts of Flanders and other aristocratical mansions around, he suddenly stopped at the low portal of the Dominican convent, which opened into the narrow street close behind the palace walls.

Siger never held his head so high — he never rang the convent bell so boldly; but he felt, notwithstanding, the reverential sinking of heart which invariably accompanied his visits to the holy place. With a timid step, he followed along the vaulted corridors the menial brother who had answered his call, until at length the latter left him at the door of the cell of Father Wolfert, Siger Roozen's confessor.

"Wait here, mynheer," said the monk, who did not recognise, in the well-dressed citizen, the poor artisan whom he had often before admitted, — "wait here, till our reverend brother is disengaged there; is a lady with him just now, and the sacred duties of the confessional must not be disturbed. Stand back when the lady retires from the cell; then knock, and you will be admitted in your turn."

Siger bowed assent, and took his station at the door, sitting down close by, on one of the stone-benches which were placed in the corridor, for the accommodation of attendant penitents, or of the brethren as they needed rest during their hours of indoor exercise. And thus did the richest man in Bruges humbly await the leisure of one of the poorest monks in Flanders.

CHAPTER II.

FATHER WOLFERT, the Dominican, had been at this period about three years an admitted brother of the cloister of White Friars at Bruges. He was then verging towards middle age; of a proud demeanour, and bold yet sinister expression of countenance: his complexion was dark, his eyes large and black, and his whole aspect significant of a haughty churchman, galled by the fetters of a subordinate station, and having in view the mitre, the red hat, or the tiara, each or all. A newly-closed scar across the forehead, and his left hand shrivelled and contracted by a wound which had pierced it through, proved clearly enough that rapier or halberd had been busy with the novice; but in those troublesome times such marks were too common to excite any particular attention.

In a little while the new brother took a high station among his fellows. He gained this ascendancy by superior talent. He was eloquent in the pulpit, indulgent in the confessional; and he soon acquired among the citizens a reputation and an influence, equal at least to that of any individual of the numerous orders which were established in Bruges, and he was deep in the secrets of many noble families. Siger Roozen had been the very first man who had knelt to him, and whispered his little transgressions in his ear: but as the father grew into fashion with the higher classes, he gradually declined the confessions of the poor; and he had resolved to discard even the original sinner, who formed his earliest stepping-stone to celebrity. He had shaken off many pretended penitents, by progressively increasing the severity of his penances. Fanatics were driven away by too much indulgence; but as Siger Roozen did not decidedly belong to either of these classes, Father Wolfert had not quite determined on the means for relieving himself from his importunies.

Siger had waited for a long time, more impatiently than he was wont to do, and he wondered at this change of feeling, not being quite aware of how sensible he had become to his

own importance. At length he heard the inner door of the cell creak on its hinges, and in a moment more, Father Wolfert appeared leading out a lady. Siger caught a full view of her, and saw that she was very lovely, and in tears. She no sooner saw that she was observed by a stranger, than she blushed deeply, held a Venetian mask close to her face with one hand, and with the other she gathered her cloak around her; and hurried away, leaving the reverend friar in an attitude of surprise at her sudden escape. He looked round, and observed Siger Roozen, hat in hand, standing close by.

"How now!" said Father Wolfert, haughtily; "who is this that prowls at my threshold? your business, friend?"

While he asked these questions he stood out into the corridor; but as he uttered what followed, he gradually stepped back into the cell with Roozen, closed the door, and sat down on an oaken chair.

"Why, what's this? Siger Roozen, in such brave apparel! This change betokens either good or ill fortune, Siger; some one has stretched to thee a helping hand, or thou hast put thine own where it should not be. Come in, good fellow, if I may still call thee so; but if thou hast aught on thy conscience, unburden it freely, and quickly, friend; for prouder, it may be greater, sinners await me. Well, Siger Roozen, of what crime wouldst thou be absolved?"

"No *crime*, holy father! 'Tis a matter that weighs not on my soul, although it agitates ~~my~~ mind, on which I would crave your reverence's counsel."

"Ay, ay, 'tis ever thus — no crime, no crime — some trifling peccadillo that a short prayer or two may absolve. Thus sinners judge themselves too leniently, friend Siger. But hold — let's see — thy offences, great or little, spring apace. 'Twas but on the St. Bavon I last shrove thee, worthy friend, not ten days gone — truly thou then hadst nothing to confess, save some wild and misplaced reveries of grandeur. Please Heaven and all the saints thou hast not been tempted, Siger! — haste, haste, man, the bell tolls — what is thy secret sin?"

"No *sin*, holy father, though I have been tempted indeed."

"Come, come to the point — be brief. Whence comes this finery? Who hast thou robbed? Where is thy buff

jerkin, and the fox-skin cap that covered so fitly thy frowzed locks, which now curl down so trimly on a kersey cloak? Tell me all — there's mercy in our holy mother church — speak out, friend?"

"This touches me to the quick, reverend father — you wrong me. I am no thief; had I been so, perhaps my guise had been more cautiously chosen. Men dress to please their fancy, Father Wolfert, and the wisest suits his habits to his means — yet I have not done that quite."

"Why no; methinks, good Siger, thy outfit is somewhat unsuited to the fair earnings of a poor mechanic."

"A poor mechanic! yes, reverend father, but *I* am no longer such. No longer poor, no more a mere mechanic. You marvel that I wear a cut plush doublet and a beaver — know, my good father, that did I choose it, my body might be covered with velvet and embroidery, and this plain hat encircled by a carcanet of diamonds."

The consequential tone of voice, and swaggering air, which accompanied it, gave Father Wolfert some surprise, but he did not betray any. He smiled incredulously. Siger, perceiving this, threw his hat on the ground, with apparent indifference, although he could not resist a pang at treating so roughly a new article of dress, the best of its kind he had ever worn. His hands being free, he thrust one into each of the side pockets of his loose breeches, and immediately pulled forth, and placed on the little stone table, two fistsful of old coins of various kinds. Florins of Italy and Spanish moidores were mixed with golden deniers of Brabant, oboles of Luxembourg and Bar; whihottes and patars of Namur, stamped with a ship; vishes of the same country, with a fish for the device; héaumes of Hainault, bearing crosses and roses; but all were of the smooth-worn coinage of the olden time, the most modern being full three centuries old. Father Wolfert, on seeing these specimens, at once divined the truth of Siger's good luck, and starting from his seat he exclaimed, —

"Why, Siger Roozen, you have discovered a treasure — you have found gold!"

"I have, may it please your reverence, with the blessing of Heaven! not only gold but jewels. Here, holy father, accept this poor gift for charity sake, for the funds of your blessed order," and with the words he emptied his pockets

completely of their contents, and heaped them on the table. "This is the first offering of my gratitude to Heaven. And this for *you*, holy father, my spiritual guide, and the counsellor on whose advice I rely to steer me safely through the perils with which the possession of wealth abounds."

Siger, suiting the action to the word, drew from an inner pocket of his doublet a large gold ring, in which was set a brilliant of dazzling lustre and considerable value, which he held forth to the astonished monk.

"Why, Siger, my good master, you know not what you offer," exclaimed Father Wolfert. "There is here where-withal to make the fortune of a dozen artisans like yourself. The proudest burgher of Bruges might not for very shame's sake wear this ring on his forefinger!"

"Most reverend father," rejoined Siger, with an air of much humility, "I have a hundred such."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the monk. "Sit down, my worthy friend, sit down. A trifling matter this! Is it so it must be called? No, no, good Master Roozen, this is verily a matter of moment. Be seated, and let us talk this over."

"But your reverence is in haste — we may defer the conference — some sinners wait your holy aid — your reverence told me so just now."

"Tut, tut, my valued 'friend, let them still wait. Are paltry sinners to be tended, and worthy men laid by? your gold here shall be the price of their indulgence. We'll pray off their penance, for this once, with all those others whom your charity absolves. A *hundred* such, good Siger! sit closer, man — speak low; into my very ear; these walls may listen if they will; hark, Siger!"

To prove the mystery of the place, and of his craft, he struck his knuckles against the wall, which sounded thin and hollow, as if it had been framed for purposes of concealment and listening.

"It is not every one should know this, Master Roozen; but your bountiful gift entitles you to the freedom of the cloister; and this generous pledge of kindness towards myself tells me I ought to have no guile with you. So gently whisper to me; and softer still in aught that may commit yourself, good Siger. How came you by this treasure?"

"*Honestly*, Father Wolfert; as any man, with a strong

arm, and directed by Heaven, might do. I dug it out of the earth," exclaimed Siger aloud, and standing upright before his confessor.

"So much the better, so much the better, good Master Roozen. As Providence has guided you to this wealth, prudence must watch over its application. We must pray for support; and to propitiate the holy St. Andrew, the patron of our cloister, you must give freely to the church. A good beginning ensures a happy term. Piety brings profit, and is the foundation stone of fortune!"

"I know it all, good father, and I shall not be forgetful of my duty. I am indeed filled with gratitude for my good luck. My heart overflows with thanksgiving; and I only wait for a fitting time to perform a pilgrimage."

"Talk not of pilgrimages, Master Roozen; honest men need not such trials."

"I've made a vow, good father."

"I'll free thee from it, Siger. Bear up, man; there's nothing on thy conscience. *Pray*, my good burgher — burgo-master that will be! Prostrate your spirit before Heaven and your saint; but hold your body straight, and your head high. If you do not over-rate your wealth — if, indeed, you possess a hundred gems, each as much worth as this one — ay or fifty, half as valuable — I promise you a place with the best in the city. None shall o'ertop you, Master Roozen. Away then with penance and pilgrimage; he who gives freely to the church needs no such means to make his peace with Heaven."

Siger liked this doctrine, although it was new to him; and the unction which the monk had laid to his ambition produced its full effect. He suddenly and silently resolved to abandon the pilgrimage; but finding his thoughts becoming confused on the subject of his growing greatness, he proposed to his reverend companion to adjourn till the evening all further discussion on his plans and prospects. Father Wolfert having more than one engagement of some import on his hands consented to this postponement, and fixed the hour of evening between twilight and moonrise to meet Siger on the western rampart, not far from St. James's Gate, and close to Savenlacht House; there to hear the details of his wealth, and consider the proper steps for its security and application.

Siger took his leave, and for the first time received a firm

pressure from the hand of his holy friend, a proof of his own importance that thrilled through him. He had quitted the cell and was fairly in the corridor, before he recollected the lady with whose appearance he had been so much struck a little while past. Emboldened by the cordial familiarity of the monk, he stepped back, and putting his hand against the half closed door he said, —

“ Please your reverence to excuse my presumption —— ”

“ Presumption, my dear friend, don’t mention such a word — it has no meaning from you to me — speak freely ! ”

“ May I then ask, without too far intruding, who was the lady whose beauty so much struck me as she quitted this place just now ? ”

Had Father Wolfert not been standing with his back to the dull light admitted through his little casement, Siger might have discerned a slight frown and slighter blush passing together across his brow. He paused for a moment, and then answered, —

“ Oh ! she is one of my peculiar flock, Master Roozen, of a noble family, a penitent, in short ; why do you ask about her ? ”

“ Is she married ? ” demanded Siger.

“ Married ! no, no,” said the monk.

“ So much the greater pity,” exclaimed Siger Roozen ; and repeating his farewell, he quitted the cloister ; loitered about the town in a restless state of mind ; walked into the church of Notre Dame, where he stayed for the celebration of the mid-day mass ; dined at a tavern ; and by various other means contrived to occupy his time, till the hour of meeting with the priest.

We must not encumber these introductory passages to our story with details of all that took place between Roozen and Father Wolfert. It is enough to state the results of their conferences. The intriguing caution of the one was proportioned to the ambitious enterprise of the other. Wolfert took care to make the ground firm under his friend’s foot ; and *that* once planted, Siger felt himself bold enough for undertakings, which, even in his days of most shadowy hope, seemed far beyond possibility. The monk acquired over him a still greater ascendancy than ever ; for without his cunning management, Siger clearly saw that he had no security for the

possession of his wealth, and for those advantages which he determined that it should obtain.

The state of Belgium at that period was one of doubt, danger, and confusion. The contest against Spanish tyranny had loosened all the ties which bound society together. In the fierce struggle for liberty, every minor consideration was forgotten ; and property of all kinds was left insecure, between despotism and anarchy. The city of Bruges, though still a place of great wealth, inhabited by many noble families, and in many ways distinguished, was rapidly declining. The turbulent spirit of its inhabitants in its proud and palmy days, when it was the emporium of Europe, had by degrees deprived it of that high distinction. The richest and most enterprising of the foreign merchants had one by one abandoned it. The establishments of the various European powers, those of the Hanseatic Towns, its best privileges, and its most lucrative manufactures, were transferred to Antwerp. Emigration and war decreased its population, improvement became stagnant, property fell in value, speculation died away ; but when an individual showed more energy than his fellows, and ventured a large purchase or extensive risk, his gains were, if successful, consequently enormous. However, as before mentioned, the insecurity of property at this crisis left little relish for enterprise ; and most men were contented to repose on the wealth they had inherited, or enjoy a competence, rather than hazard ruin in straining for increase.

Still enough of its former greatness remained to make Bruges in many ways delightful. It was at the period in question free from the actual presence of war. The riotous character of the people had subsided into one less agitating, though full as exciting. Men's minds became, by degrees, enlightened, instead of being inflamed ; general interests gained a gradual, but by no means a complete, ascendancy over local objects. The weavers, a body of men so desperately notorious in the history of the town, had, in the opening of the revolution, abandoned their looms, and taken up arms ; not as of old, to sustain some sordid monopoly for private gain, but to fight against an odious enemy for the public good. With purity of motives came refinement of manners ; and the great mart of commerce was changed into the chosen seat of elegance. The arts began to burst vividly through the fumes of intestine war.

Painting, sculpture, and music, were protected and encouraged; luxurious living and splendid apparel had been for ages characteristic of this celebrated place; and even at the period we treat of, the style of the female inhabitants, noble and plebeian, might have excited a remark from any queen who visited it similar to that of the royal consort of Philip le Bel, in the fourteenth century, that "she found there six hundred ladies as well dressed as herself." Such were the striking features of the city, when Siger Roozen began to raise his head above the ignoble crowd, and looked even higher than that, for the indulgence of his aspiring views.

The motives of Father Wolfert, in giving his aid to the fortunate goldbeater, were manifest. He hoped, by the influence of Siger Roozen's wealth, partly expended in large gifts to the church, to gain such credit with its dignitaries as would ensure the first objects of his ambition; and these, once acquired, he had but little doubt that the rest would follow. He therefore set to work to clear away all impediments to Siger's uncontrolled and positive possession of his treasure. By his influence with the grandees of the city, and the official guardians of its rights, he obtained permission for Siger's becoming the purchaser of the ruined walls and deserted premises of Savenslacht House; representing him as one who had obtained a small inheritance by the death of a relative, but who, wishing to establish himself entirely in his native city, had converted his distant property into cash. This point arranged, Siger repaired to Antwerp, where lapidists, merchants, and money-changers abounded; and he found no difficulty in disposing of a portion of his ancient coins, and a few jewels, for the sum required for his purchase. This once completed with the authorities of the city, into whose hands the dilapidated premises had fallen, the deeds duly registered, and possession formally given, the new proprietor had no obstacle to the avowal of his discovery, and to as much of his wealth as he chose to acknowledge.

Siger's first step (to propitiate the church) was to commence the foundation of a convent on the site of the old mansion. He thus compromised with his conscience, by Father Wolfert's suggestion, for his intended pilgrimage. His next measure (to conciliate the town) was an offer to purchase the whole of the waste ground, stretching from the ramparts,

west, to Asses' Street, east, and bounded on the south by the little canal before mentioned, over which he had crossed, by the aid of a couple of rotten planks, on the Sunday of his confession to Father Wolfert. The town dignitaries were rejoiced to get a supply to their coffers by the purchase money; and every one thought that Siger was flinging away foolishly the wealth he had so fortunately acquired, in a purchase which, although made for a sum far below its intrinsic worth, was pronounced dear at any price in the doubtful circumstances of the country. But Siger did not stop here. He immediately commenced the building of a long and handsome range of houses, extending at each side of the convent, in front of which gardens were laid out and planted down to the edge of the canal. This range of buildings he named *Ouden Zac**, in honour of the rotten recipient which had enclosed his treasures; and though an opposite row of houses has since his time converted this place into a regular street, it still bears its primitive appellation, which was respected even by the French, during whose authority it was called *Rue du Vieux Sac*; and, running in right angles with the convent, a street leading from *Ouden Zac* to the canal was soon constructed, and called then, as at present, the *Rozendael*.

Another of Siger's improvements was the erection of a bridge across the canal, in pursuance of his vow, at the place where the old planks were used to lie. This bridge was dedicated to St. James, after whom it was officially christened; but, even to this day, it is known by the more common name of *Zheger's Brugge*†, which was given to it by the popular voice, and which superseded for a time that of "The Lion," its ancient title. The planning of this bridge created a question of some importance to the rapidly increasing consequence of its founder. Nicholas Van Block, the stonemason, who, under the patronage of his old friend and companion, Siger Roozen, was now become Mynheer Van Block, the sculptor and architect, protested that such a thing was never heard of as a bridge being erected without the arms of the founder being placed in bas relief on the battlements. Siger was sadly puzzled how to reply to this hint. Arms he had none but the stout pair that nature had furnished him; nor could he

* Old Sack.

† Siger's Bridge.

guess at any pretension which he could raise to heraldic distinctions of any kind. In this dilemma, as in all others, he had recourse to the ready aid and as ready wit of Father Wolfert ; and neither of them failed him now, any more than on former occasions. A proper application was made, with a proper way of backing it, to old Wootershof, the celebrated herald of those times, whose office at Ghent contained the records, titles, and genealogies of all Flanders. He soon found out that Siger Roozen was the direct descendant of a younger branch of the noble house of Van Rozenhoed, which, on the emigration of its representative to Germany, above two centuries before, had fallen into decay and distress ; and, after the lapse of several generations, had finally dropped the nominal distinction of nobility, and corrupted the orthography of the family name in the person of Siger's grandfather. This discovery was officially confused and authenticated by so many intricate technicalities, that opposition would have been vain, had there been any one inclined to oppose. But that not being the case, Siger became, in due form, and by all the privileges of the law, installed in his new name of Van Rozenhoed ; and his pedigree was attested and engrossed on vellum, with the arms richly emblazoned at the head of the scroll. These were argent, a scymitar gules, a scutcheon of Flanders dexter, and one of the empire sinister ; so far being those of the old and now resuscitated house ; quartered with which, at the special and positive desire of the new member, were three hammers, enpal ; and, for crest, a sack *gueule* (open-mouthed) discharging a shower of money. Siger was determined to specify, by this means, for his own gratification and the information of the descendants he hoped for, the leading features of his history and their ancestry.

This point being arranged, the bridge was finally built, and the battlements duly surmounted by the Lion of Flanders, bearing a shield on which was sculptured the arms, as above minutely detailed ; and the curious may, even yet, be gratified by tracing these remains of Nicholas Van Block's chiseling, and the record of Siger Van Rozenhoed's munificence.

But while these various erections of convent, bridge, and mansion took effect, Siger was thinking of matrimony. Strange as it may seem, he had never lost sight of the lady whose beauty and whose tears had so much interested him at the door of Father

Wolfert's cell ; and the result of his enquiries from the monk satisfied him that she was virtuous and amiable, though poor and persecuted. Her family wished her to take the veil ; she would have preferred taking a husband. It so happened, however, that her heart was not actually engaged ; and, in her distress, she had recourse to the advice of her confessor, Father Wolfert. What *his* motives or early counsels were, we do not profess to know ; but be they what they might, they soon gave place to the strenuous recommendation that she should hearken to the wishes of one of the richest men of Flanders, and mingle the blood of the gallant family of Lovenskerke with that of the lately renovated house of Van Rozenhoed. To tell the result briefly, or, as we say commonly, "in short," Siger having submitted to a probationary year and a day, as was required by an ancient law of Bruges with respect to artisans, was nominated to the inferior dignity of hoofman of St. Nicholas Sestendeelen, the part of the town in which he had hired a handsome residence ; and having occupied this term of his noviciate in various improvements, mental and personal, he was on the same evening united to Maria de Lovenskerke, in the parish church, by his friend Father Wolfert, who was already advanced to the station of sub-prior of his convent.

In the course of another year the hoofman was promoted to be one of the thirteen echevins, or sheriffs, of the city — the convent of Jacobines was built, endowed, and consecrated — the sub-prior regularly installed as confessor to the holy house and spiritual comforter of the abbess, and the twelve nuns who composed the sisterhood ; and his worship, the echevin, had become the father of a beautiful female child, who was christened with great distinction in the cathedral church of Notre Dame, by the name of Theresa ; the ceremony being performed by his reverence the sub-prior, and the infant being held at the font by the representatives of two of the most ancient and distinguished families of Bruges.

Thus far affairs have gone on flourishingly with our friend Siger, and his friend Father Wolfert. The advances which they made in the world had not, however, by any means, reached their term. Every day added to their importance in their respective situations ; and while the monk's increasing greatness rose up towards his innate pride, the citizen made rapid

progress in manners and knowledge, under the influence of a highly bred wife, and his own instinctive aptness to improve advantages. Secured in his possessions, and every day extending his influence in the city, it was evident that if ever the country succeeded in establishing its independence, he would be one of the first men (if not the very first man) of Bruges. And leaving our old acquaintance in this prosperous state, we now take a long leave of him, and his faithful ally, the Dominican.

CHAPTER III.

ALTHOUGH fifteen years form a long period in reality, they seem to present in retrospect a space but little wider than that which divides the close of our last chapter from the opening of this.

The concluding event there particularly specified was the baptismal ceremony of our heroine that is to be, Theresa Van Rozenhoed ; but the progress of two or three years after that circumstance must be taken into account, to allow for her father's and his confessor's advances in the world, alluded to in the final paragraph ; so that, by the strict rules of calculation, we find our aforesaid heroine to be now eighteen years of age, and we resume our history in the spring of the year of grace 1600.

It was on a beautiful evening in the latter end of April in that year, that the newly elected chief burgomaster of the city of Bruges was sitting in a rustic arm-chair, on the terrace of his garden, which looked upon the large square basin forming part of the canal, that extends from the cathedral of Notre Dame, in front of the Dyver and of Steen-Houwer's Dyk. In the unenclosed space which had formerly separated these two handsome quays, and directly opposite the basin on its southern side, another had of late years been built, and now joined them together. The houses of this new quay, which was no other than that referred to in our first pages, were of a cheerful construction, less massive and imposing than those at either end.

The architecture was light and simple ; and the new range formed a pleasing link, as it were, of the chain which it served to unite.

The burgomaster's house was situated on the eastern side of the basin, its front looking towards that point. The rear commanded one of the loveliest town views that any where existed. The garden was to the north of the mansion, and occupied a tolerably large space, which at this day is covered by the house, out-offices, and grounds of the tavern called *der Hollander*.

At the period of our story it was laid out with precious flowers and plants ; and the terrace before mentioned extended for its whole western length. On the north side, the canal, which there branched off from the basin, separated it from that of the stadthouse, whose turrets rose proudly up and overlooked the scene we describe. The canal being narrow, the gardens were in a measure united, for the branches of the acacias, weeping willows, and other graceful trees, hung over from both sides, and, interlacing together, formed a pleached canopy over the smooth stream (for it was such) that flowed drowsily, and almost imperceptibly, beneath.

Beyond the house, eastward, was a larger space of open ground, now covered by the handsome fishmarket. But in *our* days, reader, this whole extent left an uninterrupted view of Steen-Houwer's Dyk on the right, and the picturesque buildings and gardens which still border the other side of the canal, including the rear of the Dominican cloister, of which the octagonal turrets, pointed gables, and square windows were seen above its tasteful, though somewhat sombre, garden, which was terminated by a small arched doorway, opening directly on the canal.

To complete the description, we must once more return to the burgomaster's house, and give a short sketch of it, as it then appeared, and indeed may still be recognised. The walls were built of brick—the architraves, and frame-work of doors and windows, of stone, curiously carved, according to the florid taste of the times. In front, a handsome porch was ascended by a flight of steps at each side ; the balustrades richly ornamented, as was the front of the house, with much fantastic carving and gilding. The family arms were in various places ingeniously sculptured ; and a marble figure of the Madonna, a correct but miniature copy from the celebrated statue by

Michael Angelo (that graced the church of Notre Dame) was placed, in a niche, over the principal entrance. A gilded balustrade surmounted the front of the house ; above which peeped some half dozen unwieldy chimneys, and the pointed tops of two octagonal turrets, by which the mansion was flanked. These turrets rose up from, and were bathed by, the water of the basin. They stood out from the rear of the house, one at each of its extremities. From each of them a door opened on the narrow terrace already mentioned, and that to the northward had also a communication with the garden. These turrets had been erected more for ornament than actual use ; but one of them was adapted by the burgomaster for special purposes of his trade ; the other, which was the one next the garden, being intended and fitted up for the accommodation of a tenant, of whom we shall presently speak more particularly.

We have thus minutely described the external appearance of the house and its appurtenances, which was admitted to be at the time (and its appearance even now will justify the character) the most elegant, though by no means the most sumptuous, mansion in Bruges.

In full enjoyment of this enviable residence, in possession of immense wealth, and in all the honours of his long-sought, and but newly-acquired, dignity, the burgomaster sat as already mentioned. He was a man verging on fifty years, of a good presence, inclined to corpulence, and richly dressed ; he seemed, to some observers from the quay, to slumber : and a curiously carved instrument appeared to sustain its position between his teeth at one end, and between his forefinger and thumb at the other, without any waking exertion of the burgomaster's will. But a nearer examination would have proved that his worship was absorbed in thought, not in sleep ; while the vapour that escaped in gentle puffs through his lips, and the fragrance it diffused around, told that he indulged in the lately introduced luxury of smoking tobacco.

He gazed upon the glassy surface of the water, on which a couple of swans were floating ; and his eyes glanced from time to time towards the long colonnade of poplars which lined the bank of the canal,—then seemed to look upon the high and clumsy steeple of the cathedral, or wandered back and rested on the spire of the town-hall, the cupola of the bishop's palace, or the turrets of the stadthouse. While thus occupied, the

burgomaster's attention seemed suddenly excited towards the farther end of the terrace; and rising from his chair, he folded his silk Chinese-patterned, and ermine-lined robe around him, put his crimson velvet cap on his head, and walked towards the place. He there perceived moving gently along, under the branching shade which covered the canal, the small boat belonging to the Dominican cloister, guided by a cowl-enveloped man, while the prior reclined in a low chair at the stern, apparently not deigning to look on the humble pilot, who pushed the boat forward by means of a long pole.

The burgomaster, rightly judging that his reverend neighbour and friend was about to honour him with a visit, hastened down the flight of grey marble steps, which descended to the basin, and, bowing with an air of respectful familiarity to the churchman, he welcomed him, and handed him from the boat. A domestic, in rich livery, who attended at a distance for the burgomaster's call, now stepped forward, arranged a second seat beside that his worship had just occupied, and then retired to his former position.

"Yes, your reverence is, as usual, cordially welcome," said the magistrate. "May I pray you, holy father, be seated. You do not, I humbly hope, feel incommoded by the odour of this far-fetched plant, the leaves of which fill my pipe. Jans, quit the garden, and let no interruption be offered, while his reverence, the Prior of St. Andrew's, sojourns here. Refuse admittance even to the echevins themselves."

"My old and worthy ally," replied the prior, taking the magistrate's hand, while the servant withdrew, "the vilest fumes from those we love are fragrant in the nostrils of friendship. How proud I am to see you thus — how rejoiced to hail you, *in fact*, what I long since prophesied you would one day be!"

"Thanks to you, good father: my success is due to your steady zeal, and fervent intercession with the blessed St. Andrew, to whom all praise!"

"A good turn merits a return, kind friend," said the priest. "The man whose wealth and worth made me, four years ago, prior of my convent, had a right to the benefit of my prayers, when so many obstacles lay in the way of his elevation to well merited honour!"

"Ay, father, and nought else but piety and prayer from such as you could have beat down and discomfited my opponents. Ah, that vile Claas Claassen! that outrageous demagogue! how impotent were his wishes, and how deep his hypocrisy!"

"A miscreant heretic, my friend!—what was to be looked for at his hands but foul play?"

"Why, your reverence knows what I think, at least what I thought, on *that* point; and you must not suppose that my burgomaster's robe, but yesterday thrown over me, has changed me in aught. As to heresy and the like, it is out of my calling — all men are equal in my eyes who look to the country's good. My enemy, Claas Claassen, may worship God in his own way, your reverence, for my part on't. I leave schismatics to the care of holy church — but I hate *him*, because I believe him to be a traitor to our liberties, and ready to sell even his own."

"Well, well, good burgomaster," said the prior, with a complacent smile, worthy of the deepest disciple of Loyola; "I do know your honest, though somewhat narrow, views, on points of faith and practice of forms. A true son of mother church, yourself, you wisely meddle not with matters beyond your comprehension; and well I trow, you have not forgotten the marvellous debt of gratitude you owe to our holy patron's intervention in your yesterday's election."

"Your reverence has never known me backward or ingrate; two massive candlesticks of purest and most fine-wrought gold already stand prepared to add to the splendour of St. Andrew's altar!"

"And the poor?" said the monk, with the true tone of insatiate beggary.

"Three bags, of a thousand florins each, await your reverence's disposal."

"They shall be well disposed of, my worthy son; and now the main points being adjusted, for piety and charity are our first duties, let us turn awhile to our poor personal concerns, and those of miserable sinners like ourselves. All promises fair for my designs; the bishopric must be mine — the archdukes have offered me the abbey of St. Donat's, with all its rich appliances; but no; 'tis the mitre I want, and Prince Maurice and the states assure it to me. Once chosen Bishop

of Bruges, and Hereditary Chancellor of Flanders, what obstacle may stop my career?"

"Heaven and St. Andrew grant your reverence success!"

"*Money!* my good friend," said the prior, in a whisper, and pressing his companion's hand.

"That shall not fail," said the burgomaster, in the same tone.

"Enough, enough, then, on that head. Now to my nephew's case. Have you bethought you of my proposal?"

"I have, holy father, with due consideration for your wishes — you know in such a case they are a law for me."

"My too kind — but I spare you the expression of my gratitude; your honest nature needs no thanks. You will, then, take the boy as your apprentice, and reject more than a dozen solicitations from the sons and *protégés* of the first families in Flanders?"

"I have resolved to do so — nothing can make me swerve from a decision or a pledge. Your nephew's indentures were drawn out and dated yesterday."

"And when shall he enter on his duties? When begins the year's noviciate, which has never failed to lead to honour and distinction? Fortunate nephew! too happy Lambert!"

"If the lad be prepared, he may enter on his functions to-morrow. His predecessor, young Arnoul de Grimberghe, gave up the turret yesterday, and to day he is sub-chamberlain to Prince Maurice."

"What! such a post already?"

"Yes, holy father — such is the poor influence of an old goldbeater."

The prior saw the well-known glance of pride that accompanied this affected humility. He had been for many a year used to humour it; and he did not fail to do so now.

"Did I not foretell," said he, with a smile, "that you would one day hold your head as high as the highest? This precious ring, which has never left my finger since the moment of the prophecy, be my token that I had a presentiment of your greatness. So, you now can obtain what peers and princes sue for in vain? Such is the value of humbleness joined with genius!"

The burgomaster knew well that he had no genius — that his outward humility was but the covering of inward pride —

and that the chief secret of his greatness lay in his money ; but he also felt that he had the merit of profiting by circumstances, and of not abusing good luck ; and the prior's flattery fell unctuously on his spirit.

" Ay," resumed he, standing up erect, " peers and princes do not disdain me — but my own town, good father, this very Bruges, to which I have done *some* service, how has it treated me ? For ten years and more has it not refused my well earned honours ? "

" Yes, my good friend, but you triumphed over all opponents yesterday ; you are now at the summit of your desires. You have now no cause of disquiet."

" True, as far as I alone am concerned ; but my daughter."

" And what of her ? Does not a splendid future open out for her ? Surpassing beauty, immense wealth, virtue, education — is not all hers, that earth can produce or heaven bestow ? "

" 'Tis most true, yet the besetting dangers of the world fill me with fears for my poor Theresa. Had her dear mother lived, my house would not have been till this day deprived of my daughter's presence," said the burgomaster, with a sigh, that sounded in accordance with his speaking tones.

" Well, well, worthy heart," answered the prior, cheeringly, " your amiable wife is with the saints in heaven. Your beautiful daughter will no more have to long for her father's home : she comes from the convent to-night ? Isn't it so ? "

This latter question was put with an expression something between doubt and disappointment, for the first was answered by an uncertain shake of the head.

" Why, how now, what has possessed you ? Speak — does not Theresa bid farewell to the holy sisters of St. Anne this evening, and enter for the first time into possession of her rights, as only child and heiress to your house and wealth ? You were resolved a week ago ? "

" Yes, reverend father ; when, in the first impulse of astonishment and indignation, I discovered that the sacred convent, founded by myself, was no sanctuary against libertinism, I did resolve to remove my child to my own guardianship, and I have made preparations for her reception suitable

to the station she is meant to fill in the world" — (here the burgomaster seemed to feel the influence of purse-proud excitement) — "but when I consider that I am, perhaps, bringing her into all the temptations of public life, and even into a domestic snare ready baited by myself, I bethink me it may be wiser to leave her where she is, till the year of my magistracy and your nephew's apprenticeship may have expired."

"You speak in parables, my friend; I may not divine the meaning of snares and baits, coupled with your own and my nephew's names."

"Then, to speak plainly, holy sir, I compare my house to a trap, your nephew the bait, myself the setter, and my dear Theresa an innocent dove, who may flutter into the danger, and be lost before she understands it."

"Aha! Is it so? Ay, ay, I comprehend you now; and well I perceive your wonted sagacity in these misgivings. But such anxieties are uncalled for, believe me. You have nought to fear on the score of my nephew, poor simple boy, who thinks but of study, retirement, and music, were there even any risk of the heiress of Van Rozenhoed disgracing her place in life, and the honours of her birth."

The burgomaster seemed to shuffle away from this latter allusion, by dwelling on the first.

"If your nephew be simple," said he, "my daughter is innocent; and simplicity and innocence form a dangerous conjunction, reverend father."

"Nay, nay, good friend, we must not pervert caution into cowardice, nor turn our backs to the light, for the sake of making shadows to be scared by. See the thing as it is. To do justice to your daughter you ought to introduce her into life, during your year of dignity. Not to do so, were to mar all those views of a noble alliance which I know your heart is bent on. Keep her still in the obscurity of her convent for this critical year, and in the next you may see her wed the son of your old foe, Claas Claassen the tanner!"

"Wed the son of Claas Claassen! — of him, the factious old hide-wetter! never, never! I would sooner see her stretched a corpse at my feet — and him pickled in one of his own tan-pits. No, no; my girl must wed with honour. The whole hope of my life — the vision of my prosperity has been

such, she shall not sully the blood of—of—of De Lovenskerke, nor the *name* of Roozen!"

"Of Van Rozenhoed, my too modest friend," chimed in the prior, who often found it necessary to curb the citizen's impetuous candour. "Then, now is your time," continued he. "Starting into life in all the splendour which you can throw around your magistracy, seeing and being seen by the first in the land, with all her charms of person, and fortune unlimited, who may not claim the hand of Theresa, and be honoured by the gift? By the way, we may hope that Prince Maurice himself will be soon master of our city again. Were the Spaniards driven out once more—as, St. Andrew be pleased, they will—the prince will march in triumphant."

"And what then?" asked the burgomaster, almost breathlessly, as one who gazes on the peak of some sublime mountain, which looks beyond his reach, but which he *feels* to be within it.

"What then? Why all the young nobles of Holland, and many of Flanders and Brabant, will follow in his train, will be your guests, your gossips, your fellows, ay, and the suitors of your daughter, that's all."

"My best counsellor, my own true friend!" cried the burgomaster, "your reasoning is worthy of Solomon. You have decided, and, what is more, *convinced* me. Theresa comes home to-night; her apartments are in readiness: the whole of this turret close by is hers. That of the apprentice yonder is for the service of your nephew."

"Thank Heaven, you have decided wisely!" answered the prior, not thinking it necessary to conceal his satisfaction. "And now that your own clear sense has put you in the right way for your daughter's welfare, I will remove all possibility of qualms on the subject of your new apprentice, by letting you see who and what he is."

With these words, the prior gathered up his white serge robes about him, and stepping forward on the terrace, he leaned over the balustrade, and called out, "Lambert Boonen! Lambert! Nephew! Come hither, sirrah, and know thy worshipful master, the chief magistrate of Bruges."

The burgomaster was somewhat astonished to see the pilot of the little boat, which lay moored at the foot of the steps,

fling off his monk's cowl at these words, and ascend to the garden with a timid and awkward air.

"Nay, reverend prior," exclaimed he, "this was ill done, to keep the youth a waiting. It is not thus I would have shown dishonour to your sister's son."

"Had he been my brother's, worthy friend, to wait thy pleasure and leisure would have honoured him. He has learned to attend on his betters. You know he was meant for the church, but Heaven had not set his heart on its service; and he follows a new, and (not offensively is it spoken) a profane ambition for worldly advancement and distinction. The laws of our renovated, and soon to be liberated, country, are now his sole study; and under your patronage he justly reckons on the highest honours they may lead to."

"My interest and influence is, as your reverence knows, entirely devoted to your service; and although the career of arms has been chiefly the choice of my apprentices, still diplomacy and judicature have not been without their aspirants, from among the youths who have hitherto worked in the goldbeater's turret."

The prior now haughtily beckoned for the youth to come forward. He had waited on the terrace, till he saw this summons. He then advanced, and stood before the religious and civil dignitaries with eyes cast on the ground. He was dressed in a plain black jerkin, and short cloak of the same; he wore a falling collar instead of the high-starched ruff worn by almost all men of condition; his unslashed breeches had knots of black riband at the knees; and his shoes of buff leather were fastened with corresponding ties. A black silk cap, such as was worn by professors and students in those days, closely covered his head; and the little grey hat which he held in his hands had not even the decoration of a cock's feather.

The burgomaster saw, or fancied he saw, at a glance, that this was a person nothing dangerous: and he inwardly congratulated himself that his choice of an inmate to his house had fallen on such a contrast to the high-born and impetuous youths who had heretofore been his *protégés*. He asked a few questions of his new apprentice, as to his tastes and studies.

"Music, and the laws," were the laconic and modestly-spoken replies.

"And when, my young friend, would you feel inclined to enter on your new pursuits?"

"When it pleases your worship and my uncle; but if I might crave a few days from the present to allow me to make some befitting additions to my wardrobe and my stock of books, I would esteem myself much favoured."

"Prettily spoken, youngster; with a proper sense of duty and affection. Your reverence must decide; I am satisfied with the boy's arrangement."

"Be it so then," said the prior; "and now, Lambert," addressing the young man, "now that I have introduced thee to the first citizen of Bruges, thou mayest really feel thyself launched into life. Thou hast made the first step towards the great object of thy desires. In a week thou enterest on a station sought for and sure to be envied by some of the proudest of the land. Hold thy ground firmly, my lad, for perils may beset thee. The disappointed look on success as a crime; and revenge is twin-brother to envy. Thy duties here are easily learned: thou wilt implicitly follow the instructions of thy master; thou wilt know thy station and keep it. Respect this distinguished citizen as thy patron. Have thine ears only for his words, thine eyes for his gestures, thy words for his service—but be deaf, blind, and dumb for every thing else; and, above all things, never listen, look, or speak to aught that inhabits this turret, opposite to thine own."

"To so profoundly sensible a discourse," said the burgomaster, "I can add but little; but this I will say, gentle youth, begin your business boldly, continue it steadily, and prosper! Take the hammer in your hand, like an honest goldbeater, and you may find, perhaps, that you are striking the nail of good fortune right on the head."

After the delivery of these lectures, the youth bowed low; and then, by the prior's orders, retreated to the boat. He wrapped his monk's cassock around him, and took the guiding pole in his hand; and in a few minutes both he and his reverend freight were again gliding down the canal in the direction of the Dominican cloister.

The burgomaster, after many friendly and respectful farewells, retired into his house.

CHAPTER IV.

THE conference just recorded will have told the reader a good deal of what we ourselves know relative to the personages who figured in it ; but some things require detail, which shall be condensed into the smallest possible compass, with due consideration to the impatience of hearers and readers, when a speaker stands up, or a writer sits down, " in explanation."

Siger Van Rozenhoed, though deeply tinged with the belief in " fate and metaphysical aid," common to his time, had none of the intolerance of his sect. His character was one of those which mark strongly the difference between superstition and bigotry, and seem to prove them incompatible with each other. Superstition, dealing wholly with the vague and visionary, carries the mind beyond the tangible limits by which bigotry is bounded. Expense and narrowness are their respective distinctions. Superstition loves to dissolve, as it were, the solidity of reason itself : its notions of nature are but the shadows of thought, which is formed by bigotry into material shapes, all hard, crude, and repulsive. Van Rozenhoed looked with awe on the mysteries of his religion ; he honoured its agents and obeyed its forms, but his veneration went no farther. He could fix no creed for himself on the needle points of sectarian distinctions, nor hate another for his incapacity to comprehend them, any more than for his disability to count the stars. Had his mind, in short, been wholly absorbed by religion, he might have been inflated into fanaticism ; but he never could have sunk into bigotry.

It has been seen that he had prospered in life as completely as he deserved to do, but that he had found the cup of prosperity occasionally drugged with the bitters which mix with even its sweetest draught. He had lost, after a few years, the wife whose judgment had consolidated all his plans, and whose rank, elegance, and good taste, had thrown a graceful veil across his coarse but solid worth. Siger, with an intuitive aptness for distinctions, very soon adapted himself to those which his wealth and marriage procured, and he was quickly able to pass muster, without any betrayal of unnecessary facts,

with those to whose equality he was admitted by the alleged privilege of his birth, but in the evident right of his money. He had soon silenced the clamours of all disputants to his property. Fortunately for him the accidental burning, in the year 1450, of the tower in which the records and charters of the town had been deposited, destroyed the means by which chicanery itself could have long withstood the influence of his own purse, and of Father Wolfert's exertions. He was regularly, and beyond all future cavil, confirmed in the possession of the lands he had purchased; and he then commenced a series of improvements and speculations, with a spirit rarely equalled in the most prosperous times, and, at the disturbed epoch of his proceedings, without any parallel. His enterprises were not confined to the city: he was the chief mover of the plan which ended in the formation of the splendid canal between Bruges and Ghent, which the jealousy of the latter town had long counteracted. Siger had a share in almost every undertaking of moment by the great companies of Antwerp; and he was secretly concerned in the chief contracts and loans for the services of the states of Holland during a considerable part of their long contest against Spain, now happily drawing to a close. The immense increase of fortune acquired by his activity and skill was, however, freely shared with individuals and his country. He had lent many a large sum to private friends; and in all matters of necessity, he contributed to the public wants, on terms which put to shame the base monopolists and usurers of those days. By such means he had acquired a high character and influence with the leading patriots. The great Prince of Orange knew him well; and his heroic son, Prince Maurice, after his succession to his murdered father's rank and fame, had many a time recourse to the aid of Van Rozenhoed's ever ready purse, although personally unacquainted with him; and he recompensed his public and private worth by a prompt attention to his recommendations, which were always preferred to those of the intriguers by whom the prince was beset. The government of the city of Bruges had been for some years, almost ever since it was betrayed to the Spaniards by the Count of Arschot, confided to Don Juan de Trovaldo, an officer of considerable merit, who had practised the study of his art under the notorious Alva, and continued it under the celebrated Duke of Parma. He was appointed to

his present command by the latter general, and had proved himself a staunch adherent to the tyranny of Spanish rule on many trying occasions. But for several years previous to the epoch now under notice, he had but little opportunity of displaying his military talents, being left in the quiet possession of the city, which he governed in the name of the new sovereign, the Archduke Albert and his wife Isabella, the daughter of Philip II. of Spain, before whose death, even, they entered on their possession of those parts of Belgium which had re-submitted to his sway.

Bruges had for a considerable interval been freed from the presence of the conflicting armies, and only suffered its share of the general privations to which the towns of Flanders were subject; while some of the Dutch provinces, and the southern counties of Brabant, were scourged with the actual miseries of war. It was owing to this state of armed inaction that a fair field was open to the party intrigues of such men as Claas Claassen, and the patriotic undertakings of Siger Van Rozenhoed. The uncertainty of the struggle in which these countries were involved had at length softened down the spirit of the contest, and men's interests accomplished what humanity could not. Conciliation was found a better instrument than cruelty. The towns in the possession of the Spaniards were therefore ruled with a milder sway. The exercise of the reformed worship was privately allowed, though prohibited by law, in violation of the peace of religion published at Ghent in 1578. Liberty of ingress and egress was permitted to the burgesses, and to persons carrying certificates signed by the magistrates; so that the commerce of the patriotic, as well as the Spanish party, with their several friends, was but little interrupted.

In the city of Bruges these parties were nearly equal; for the weight of intelligence and respectability on the side of freedom balanced the apparent preponderance of numbers, ignorance, and bigotry. Among the steadiest of the patriots was Siger Van Rozenhoed—among the most clamorous Claas Claassen. The former, though a stanch Catholic, could never be reconciled to the Spanish sway, having in the early burst of liberty enjoyed its sweets. His opponent in civic honours, a tolerated reformer, hated the oppressors of his country and his conscience; yet neither of these men would consent to adopt the privilege which was open to all, of quitting Bruges and

settling in Holland. They were both too much attached to the place of their birth, the scene of their prosperity, and the source of their importance.

Claas Claassen had been long the avowed enemy of Siger Van Rozenhoed. In the very opening of the latter's career, Claas had opposed him. He was himself, at that time, one of the wealthiest men in Bruges; and envy at the greater riches of the lucky goldbeater was the first cause of his hostility, which was strengthened by Siger's marriage, and his admission into the honours of nobility and ancestry. It was through Claas Claassen's influence that the old and obsolete law was put in force, which refused to all working mechanics admission into the civic offices, until the expiration of a year after their manumission; and by a long series of intrigues, he succeeded in retarding Siger's advances beyond the insignificant post of hoofman of his section, and his being named one of the thirteen echevins, for a period quite inconsistent with the functionary's wealth and character. Siger's pride in his own consequence would not condescend to meet this opposition by the unworthy methods which upheld it. He never sought an honour or asked for a suffrage, but waited with an irritated forbearance, which he fancied to be dignity, until offered the place which he would not solicit. Many of his fellow-townsmen and acquaintances understood this temper; and being quite sure that no apparent slight would abate his efforts for the good of the city, they negatively participated in the injustice done him, until their own private interests became, by degrees, dependent on his good offices, and involved in his promotion. Thus he, at length, obtained, at unusually long intervals, honour after honour, and finally came to be what we now know him for, chief burgomaster of the city.

Siger's main fault was the pride of seeming humble; and it was most strongly exemplified by a peculiarity which might be gathered from his conversation with the Prior of St. Andrew's recorded in the last chapter. His shrewdness had, even in the first days of his good fortune, told him to what he would be exposed, from the jealousies and malice of those who witnessed his sudden elevation, if he strove (as is too common with the low horn) to stifle the memories of others, by a seeming forgetfulness of himself. He therefore resolved to make it his apparent glory to be what he really was; to acknowledge it on

all occasions ; to boast of it as an enhancement of his growing greatness ; and, even in the ranks of nobility itself, to adopt the very insignia of his trade. We have seen that he had quartered three hammers in his coat of arms. The same instrument was stamped on all his articles of plate and furniture ; his portrait was painted, with a hammer in the right hand, by one Rubens, a young artist whom he patronised, and whose painting, had it but survived, would have given to Van Rozenhoed a lease of immortality, as long as is granted to canvass and colouring. But he marked his early situation in life still more strongly than by its emblem. He signed his name, on all occasions,

ZEGHER VAN ROZENHOED,

Goud Slagher ;

and, to keep up the more decided avowal of his trade, he openly professed its practice, and kept in his constant employment an *apprentice*.

It need hardly be told that this office was a sinecure, and all this semblance of artisanship but a quaint device to neutralise the reflections of envy and malice. Among citizens, like those of Bruges, and with the habits and opinions of the times, it had its full effect ; nor did it offer the least dishonour to Siger in the class into which he had gained admission. On the contrary, his happy thought of retaining a *protégé*, under the assumed appointment of apprentice, became the means of binding him more closely with many of the most distinguished families of Flanders. His patronage, as has been already stated, was the sure means of advancing these youths to honour and dignity ; and their nominal descent into the ranks of trade for one year was looked on like the habit of a masquerader, adopted for some serious purpose, which was forwarded by the mummery of a night. Above a dozen young men had filled this situation. It had been unsuccessfully sought for by scores. The rejected applicants and their friends formed, as might be supposed, so many enemies to Van Rozenhoed ; and at the time of his appointment to the magistracy he had to encounter all the enmity of inevitable disappointments.

But when it was publicly known that Lambert Boonen, the

hitherto unheard-of nephew of the prior, had succeeded to the appointment, the rage of the rejected factions was unbounded. All parties joined in a league of annoyance against the burgomaster, in open designs against his apprentice, and in smothered hatred towards his confessor. The object of the latter was universally pronounced to be the making a match between his nephew and the burgomaster's daughter, whose approaching introduction to the world was known to every one, and whose wealth and beauty made her a mark for all the fathers, and mothers, and sons of the country.

Within an hour after the conference between Van Rozenhoed and the prior, whom the reader must have recognised as his old acquaintance Father Wolfert, Theresa, the object of so much public and domestic interest, arrived at her father's mansion, then called Rozenhoed House. She was brought there from the convent by the abbess herself, and accompanied by her own faithful attendant Nona, who had (on her mother's death, ten years before,) entered with her the sanctuary, where she received her education, and now left it with her, to watch over her in the world for which it had been meant to prepare her. This woman, like most of those to whom the care of children is confided, was immoderately attached to her charge; and there was no peril she would not risk, no sacrifice she would not make, for Theresa, *provided* she was sure of the approval of Father Wolfert, her confessor and patron (we might almost have said patron *saint*), for her devotion to him was without limitation. It was through his recommendation she had entered the family of Van Rozenhoed immediately on his marriage; and from the hour of Theresa's birth she had been her nurse, in all things, exclusive of that holiest of duties which nature has confided to the mother's breast.

When Van Rozenhoed was left a widower, and Theresa, in the tenderest sense, an orphan, it was resolved, by the advice of Father Wolfert, then sub-prior of his cloister, to place the child with the sisters of St. Anne, for education and accomplishments suited to the distinguished station to which her father destined her. Father Wolfert had never mentioned his nephew, nor made application for the *apprenticeship*, until he had calculated the certainty of Van Rozenhoed's appointment as burgomaster, on which occasion it was decided between them, that Theresa should quit the convent and return to her

father's house. The chief motives for these measures with regard to her have been already mentioned. Those of the prior, in respect of the new apprentice, required no sifting, at least in the opinions of the baffled candidates for the place.

Theresa had received such an education at the hands of the sisterhood as was usual in such establishments as theirs. She was better informed in the various branches of knowledge than girls educated at home; and in the common accomplishments of those days, her natural taste ensured a proficiency more than usual. She was brought up in strict notions of piety; and the doctrine of passive obedience to her father's and her confessor's will was rigidly inculcated. For all matters appertaining to this life, she was instructed to rely on the former; for all that related to another and a better world, Father Wolfert was pointed out as an infallible guide. On these points of belief Theresa was a true Catholic. She considered herself born for her father's will, as far as worldly concerns were in question; and she became imbued with the feeling, that whenever she might quit the convent and return home, it was for the purpose of making a marriage with some one of high distinction, to be chosen by her father, and, as a matter of course, accepted by her. This notion gradually seemed to make a part of her mind, as if it sprung up there self-formed; and the ambitious pride which she inherited from her father, as her chief and almost her only fault, involuntarily cherished the idea of a high alliance.

During Theresa's occasional days of release from her convent duties, she saw some of the best society of Bruges, her father's house being frequented by no other. These visits gave her a superficial acquaintance with the world, and a tone of manners superior to what she would have contracted in unbroken seclusion. All persons were excluded on these occasions by the wary Van Rozenhoed, who might at all counteract his own views as to his daughter's establishment. But Theresa soon discovered that she was an object of curiosity and even of admiration; and she was not at all displeased to observe, that while she sailed in her father's boat on the canal, drove in his carriage through the streets, or leant over the garden balustrade to feed the swans in the basin below, she was followed and gazed at by several young men; and she was best pleased

with the looks of those the most richly dressed, and of the proudest mien.

"Ah, dearest Beatrice," said our heroine one evening, to her chosen friend, a Spanish novice, as they paced a shaded walk in the convent garden, which now flourished in the wide extent of what was formerly the waste ground of Savenslacht House; "ah, my friend, how I pant for the hour that is to see my entry into the world! My only regret will be given to thee; the good abbess and the sisters, all are contented here; but thou, dear Beatrice, even on this eve of thy solemn vows, thou art not! Nay, do not start nor blush, even though I have penetrated thy secret."

"My *secret*, Theresa!" exclaimed the young novice with a deeper blush, and an accent of alarm.

"Pardon me, Beatrice, I should have said thy secret wishes. I meant not to reproach thee with the duplicity of keeping aught else from my confidence; and *those* I know it is thy duty to conceal even from thyself."

"I doubt much the virtue of that doctrine," answered Beatrice. "I have followed it till my heart has nearly burst — my feelings must have vent — I want a confidant — I have fixed on thee, Theresa — I have not doubted nor delayed, for this is the moment for avowal, and thy remark leads to it. Wilt thou hearken to me? Thou art not wrong in thy suspicions — I am indeed discontented, but not unhappy. These walls, this dress, my present duties, are all hateful — those intended for me are horrible!"

The dark eyes of the novice flashed as she uttered these words, and her commanding figure rose to its utmost height. Theresa could scarcely bear to look upon her; and with a half averted face she said, —

"You terrify me, Beatrice. This is wondrous, indeed; surely thou dost not mock me, my best friend?"

The enquiring and suppliant tone of this question softened the novice, and she could not restrain her tears.

"Alas, alas!" cried she, "I am in no mood for mockery — I grieve to part from thee — I want thy advice — no, not that exactly — but thy pity, thy consolation, an attentive ear to my confession, a kind heart when thou hast heard it. Wilt thou give me these? Do not refuse me, Theresa. The day may come when thou mayst want such for thyself."

"Speak on, speak on, dear Beatrice. I am shocked and grieved at this distress. What can it mean?"

"Why, this, Theresa — but let me hold thy hand, lest thou wouldst shun me — I *love*, deeply and devoutly."

"Well!" exclaimed Theresa, with a beaming look and close pressure of her friend's hand — "well! and what then? Is this all that agitates thee, and makes thee wretched? Thou lovest! I know thou dost, thy guardian, thy brother, *me*. Our holy church cannot be jealous of such love."

"Amiable, and happily innocent Theresa! But I must undeceive thee now. The love I speak of, is for a different object far than those, Theresa. They are all sanctified and pure affections — but that *other* is a passion deep, and they would persuade us unholy. It is that fire which, they say, consumes its votaries — in itself a heaven that but leads us, they pretend, to hell. The man I love, Theresa——"

"What, Beatrice, what hast thou said? Thou lovest a *man* — and he neither brother, nor parent, nor guardian! The holy saints preserve us both! How couldst thou confess, or how could I listen to aught so monstrous! Why, even in *me*, destined for the world, and for whom marriage is a duty, it would be criminal to give my heart without my father's will; but in thee, devoted to Heaven, and on the very point of taking the vows!"

"Theresa, I expected this. Thy innocent mind reveres these maxims, which mine scoffs at and rejects. Thou art a Fleming, by nature cold, by feeling and education a Catholic. I am a Moriscoe, warm and glowing as the climate of my birthplace, and by very instinct of the faith of my fathers. My native Andalusian vale, the memory of my days of childhood, my parents' enthusiasm, the words of the Prophet, all have imbued my mind with what only wanted the excitement of love, to transform me from the willing slave you have known me, to the enfranchised being I am now."

"Holy St. Anne, how can I answer this?" exclaimed Theresa, clasping her hands, and throwing on the novice a look of grief and astonishment. "How will your guardian, the governor, hear it?"

"My guardian! The governor!" replied Beatrice, with a bitter sneer. "What care I? When he hears it, if thou betrayest me not, I shall be far from his base displeasure and

baser designs, in the care of one who loves and will protect me. Nay, my Theresa, do not look so harshly on me, nor shrink from my embrace. Pity me the rather — and only see in me a woman, weak in feeling, perhaps, but strong in purpose ; unfortunate from her birth, a slave in infancy, doomed to escape from one tyranny but by sacrificing herself to another ; and at length finding freedom from both in the dictates of nature and the enthusiasm of love.”

“ I understand thee not, Beatrice — thou knowest I do not — neither thy allusions nor thy wild, and, I fear, unhallowed, feelings. Yet I love thee truly, my chosen and most dear friend ! I would do all things in virtue and duty for thee. I am almost stunned by thy strange words ; but if hearkening to them, with all my mind intent upon thy good, can soothe or serve thee, go on, go on ; unburden thyself to me — but do not, I implore thee, say aught which thy holy state forbids, and which a simple maiden may not virtuously hear.”

“ What dost thou take me for, Theresa ? Heaven knows I love and cherish thee too well to wound thee in word or thought. Come this way, then, under the shelter of these lime trees. Sister Jaquelina yonder, even at her prayers, old crone that she is, hath eyes and ears for less venerable sinners than herself.”

Theresa suffered herself to be led onwards by her friend, though shocked at the tone of levity which, in reference to the pious old nun, had succeeded to the license of her former speech.

“ Now, then, my friend,” resumed Beatrice, “ hearken to one part of my history, which thou has yet to learn. Hitherto thou hast known me but as the ward of Don Juan de Trovaldo, the governor of this town ; destined for a convent, by my own choice, and placed here by my own consent. Learn now that I am not his ward, and he, Heaven knows, has never stretched a guardian hand across me. I was his *slave*, Theresa — purchased by my father’s blood — by my mother’s shame. Trovaldo was the murderer of the one, and the violator of the other. He, when a mere youth, accompanied one of those fierce bands let loose by the tyrant Philip into the strong holds of the Apulxara hills, to pursue the remnants of our race with fire and sword, and lead the sad survivors into slavery. My father fell by his hand. My mother’s youth

and beauty spared her to fill the murderer's arms, until grief brought her to her early grave ; and my brother and myself were doomed to remain the servitors of him who had such claims on our — hatred. My brother, whom you have seen at the grate, Gaspar, as they *christened* him, but whose true and early name is Aben Farez, the last descendant of a race of chieftains, is to this day his *slave*. I grew up, Theresa, as you see me, with form and features too like, alas ! to my wretched mother's not to excite the vile desires of my master. He reared me for the hateful honour of supplying the place he had forced my mother to fill, and with the grossness of his soldier-mind he strove to train mine away from all the true charms of womanhood. My education better suits me for a camp than a convent. I can wield a lance easier than a bodkin ; and can curb a horse better than I count a rosary. Need I tell thee that, with the earliest dawn of knowledge, I loathed Trovaldo ? That abhorrence seemed to force my mind into unusual ripeness. I understood his views, when other girls older than myself could not comprehend them. I will not shock thee with the recital of all that followed ; but every art of seduction, every attempted violence failed ; and Trovaldo had no alternative but to force me into this convent, sure that his power over the abbess would leave me at his mercy, when I had finally renounced the world, and was beyond my brother's aid. To him I have never exposed Don Juan's designs. I left that for my last resource ; and trusted to fate to free me without endangering him. Here I have spent a year, that would have been intolerable, had I not found in thee, Theresa, a spirit, not congenial indeed to mine, but one that it could commune with ; and I here met *him* who has given my life new worth, in giving it an *object*. Here, Theresa, in this garden, night after night, while thou hast slept in thy little chamber, happy and undisturbed, and while the poor sisters have drawled out their drowsy orisons, I have crept from my cell and met my lover, who stole in, disguised as a pilgrim, interchanging words of powerful import, till the dawn has found us unconscious that the night was past."

" You make me shudder, Beatrice. What words are these you utter ? Good God ! do you forget that to-morrow you take the vows — to-morrow enter for ever into the bosom of the church ? "

“ Never, never, Theresa ! no vow shall ever pass these regenerated lips — no tie, save love, and feeling, shall ever bind me ! ”

“ Cruel, cruel Beatrice, why have you told me this — why made me a party in your criminal thoughts ? My blood is chilled while you speak ; and yours, Beatrice, seems visibly boiling through your swollen veins, and burning in your cheeks. ”

“ It is, indeed, Theresa ; thou readest me well. Excitement is at the highest pitch. My bosom swells — my brain ferments. But call me not cruel in my confidence. It is to prove my love for thee, to save thee from other fears on my account, that I tell thee this. She who has been my only friend shall not at least accuse me of duplicity towards her. Thou knowest me now, Theresa — at last — at *the* last ; the end of our friendship, perhaps — but the opening of my existence. I now begin to live ; and thou, Theresa, thou too wilt soon quit these gloomy walls to enter the world, and shine in all the purity of what it calls virtue, and (what it values more) in all the brilliancy of wealth. Mine is another course, more free, but — ”

“ Oh, Beatrice ! For Heaven’s sake, for thine own, what dost thou mean ? I tremble while I ask thee. Thou talkest of thy lover — he will be thy *husband* ? Since thou wilt brave the dangers of thy course, it will be with unstained honour, surely ? Say so, I beseech thee ! ”

“ I scorn to deceive thee, my friend. The man I fly with *cannot* be my husband — he has sworn to marry another. ”

“ Enough, enough, Beatrice — no more, my friend, indeed ! Lost as thou art, resolutely, wilfully lost, I can no longer look on thee — but I will not betray thee — may Heaven forgive thee ! yet it is not too late. Pause but one day — bethink thee well — I have no words to urge thee back to duty, but thine own strong mind will speak to thee. Thou hast been wildered in a maze of evil thoughts ; but thy soul is now unburdened of its secret load. Reflect, then — reflect. ”

“ Hush, hush ! here comes the abbess. ” Not a word or look between us — go towards the house, Theresa ; I do not say farewell, we shall meet again — go, go. ”

With these words the novice pressed Theresa’s hands to her

lips, and then hurried into the shrubbery. Theresa, not less agitated, hastened by another path into the chapel; witnessed, but scarcely heard, the vesper service; then sought her chamber, and sunk on a chair, in a bewildered reverie. The discourse of Beatrice had given rise to a world of new sensations. The facts relating to her life; Trovaldo's baseness; the desperate design she had formed; but, above all, the passion she avowed for some unknown object, in terms so passionate and so unmeasured, called up a crowd of ideas, too confused to attain the circumstance of thought.

She sat in this state of musing till the shades of night had quite closed in, and neither moon nor stars threw light across the heavens, nor formed shadows upon earth. The garden was a mass of gloom; and a heavy breeze swept through the sultry air, and lazily shook the branches of the lime trees and elms. The convent clock struck ten. Theresa started in surprise when she counted the strokes. All was silent in the house. Not a lamp glimmered from a single casement, save that of the infirmary, where two of the nuns lay, watched by one of the poor sisters, whose duty it was to attend the sick of this and other religious houses, or of the poor citizens, equally with those of their own.

When Theresa recovered her thoughts sufficiently to form them into some purpose, her first impulse was to seek Beatrice, and by all the reasoning she could command to dissuade her from the design she had so imperfectly announced. She accordingly quitted her chamber, and stole on tiptoe to the door of the novice's cell. A little lamp, glimmering at the distant end of the corridor, showed her the door, and her heart sunk on perceiving that it was open. She however entered, and was soon convinced that the cell was empty. The bed was unoccupied, and every thing in confusion. The dress of the novice lay upon the floor; and as Theresa groped around her feet struck against several small articles. Among others which she stooped to pick up was the crucifix of ebony, which used to hang at Beatrice's girdle, and which she had thus flung behind her, as if to mark her contempt for the faith which she renounced and fled from. Such was the notion which struck Theresa, but even the shock which it caused did not chill the generous impulse that prompted her to seek her

friend, while a chance remained of interposing one appeal between her and ruin.

She accordingly left the cell, and with cautious haste descended to the little postern door that opened on the garden. She trembled at the idea of unbolting this door, fearing the noise might disturb the porteress, who slept close by ; but as she came on tiptoe towards it, she felt the night air upon her face and neck, and she found that all obstacle to her egress had been removed. Stooping beneath the archway she stepped into the garden, and hurried along from path to path, in the almost hopeless chance of discovering the fugitive.

She at length reached the wall, at that side of the garden which was bounded by the waste grounds lying towards the old gate of St. James. A rustling in the shrubs did not alarm her, but urged her, on the contrary, to examine them closely. She two or three times uttered in a loud whisper the name of Beatrice ; the rustling of the leaves ceased, and no sound answered her.

“ Oh, Beatrice! my dear friend,” said she, in a somewhat more audible tone, “ I implore thee to answer me, if indeed thou art not gone, not lost for ever. Beatrice, Beatrice!”

A figure immediately emerged from the shrubs ; but Theresa started back, for she thought it was that of a man.

“ Shrink not, Theresa — it is me, Beatrice : I am but disguised in apparel, not changed in mind or purpose. I am on the point of flight. Thanks to thy kind heart for this last proof of friendship — farewell — farewell ! — See, he is descending the ladder.”

“ Who, Beatrice ? what ladder ? ” asked Theresa in alarm.

“ My lover, Theresa — that ladder of cord which leads to liberty — farewell, dearest girl ! Be happy, and remember me ! ”

With these words she embraced her affrighted friend, who could not resist a feeling that made her shrink, as Beatrice’s arms, in their male apparel, were cast round her.

A man now sprang from the wall, of a light and graceful form, as well as Theresa could observe. He took Beatrice by the hand ; and murmuring a few words, his dagger’s blade was visible to our heroine, who stood transfixed to the spot, without power to move or speak.

“ ’Tis nothing to be alarmed at,” said Beatrice, catching

the man's uplifted hand, " 't is only my friend Theresa, of whom we have so often spoken, who has accompanied me in this perilous hour. Theresa, dearest, fear nothing," added she, turning to the trembling girl, and warmly pressing her hand, " this is no time for ceremony ; a hurried presentation must be all I can afford to either, and the name of *one* I dare not mention. You may know him yet, Theresa, but now that must not be. Here, take her chill hand in yours, as a token of future friendship — and now to mount the ladder ; I feel that all must be secure that leads to liberty. Farewell, farewell, Theresa ! "

While Beatrice had been uttering this speech, her lover had firmly fixed the ends of his rope ladder in the earth ; and, as she fearlessly and actively ascended the wall, he obeyed her direction, by taking Theresa's powerless hand in his. He pressed it to his heart ; and while her various emotions rendered her totally passive, he caught her round the waist, held her close to him, and imprinted kiss after kiss, not on her cheeks, as Beatrice had done, but on her lips and her heaving bosom, which was exposed to his licentious daring. He spoke not a word ; and when at length Beatrice called to him from the other side of the wall, which she had safely descended, he loosed Theresa from his embrace, and placed her gently on a bench that stood in the shade of the trees, close to which this scene had been acted. He in a moment gained the top of the wall, and drew up the ladder ; and Theresa heard the active bound with which he reached the earth beyond. She started from her seat — rushed to the convent — and reaching her own room, she fastened the door, and flung herself on her bed, in an overwhelming tumult of feeling. The personal insult she had suffered revolted and terrified her. In its recollection every thing else seemed forgotten ; the criminality of Beatrice, the sacrilege of her lover, and the involuntary share which she herself had borne in each. Her agitation ended in a flood of tears, which had their source in wounded pride and outraged delicacy, and which deluged, but could not assuage them.

" Lost, unfortunate Beatrice," cried she, when her feelings could turn into another channel, " guilty, without one solace for thy guilt ! for what canst thou expect from the man who, in the very moment of thy abandonment of all for him, could

give loose to the libertine impulse that another woman inspired!"

The sensation excited by Beatrice's flight may be easily imagined. The convent was next morning the scene of consternation and alarm, which soon spread to all the other religious establishments in the city; thence to the private houses and public places; and the unusual event became the absorbing topic of conversation, misrepresentation, and calumny. The Protestant party made the most of so fair a subject of scandal against their Catholic masters; and *they*, in their turn, denounced the heretic citizens *en masse*, as the instigators of the sacrilege, which must, it was maintained, have been effected by some one of their body. The priests thundered and anathematised, the prior of the Dominicans more loudly than the rest. The civil authorities of the town put every engine of discovery into action. But the most violent and most powerful, as well as the most interested of all who interfered, was Don Juan de Trovaldo, the governor. His rage was beyond all bounds; he saw himself baffled in his malice, as he had been in his desires. The intended victim to his worst passions had escaped them all, and another had snatched away in an hour what he had for years struggled to possess. He issued a proclamation, dooming death to the criminals; and the bishop added his fiat, which faithfully promised them damnation. But besides these dubiously prophetic denouncements, every possible inducement of reward, here and hereafter, was held out to all who might discover the attainted pair, and hand them over to justice.

Along with the many agents engaged by these inducements was one instigated by sentiments far different. The prospect of wealth and promise of salvation presented no temptation to him, for he despised and hated the sources which had thus proclaimed them. Liberty and vengeance were the spurs that urged him on. The first was solemnly sworn to him by Trovaldo, the latter he vowed to himself. This person was Gaspar, as he was commonly named, but, in his own calling, Aben Farez, the Moriscoe, Beatrice's brother, and the governor's slave.

The first object of reasonable suspicion, on whom the various efforts of these parties could fix, was Renault Claassen, the youngest son of Claas Claassen, the tanner. This young

man was seen by several of the citizens in the close vicinage of the convent on the night of Beatrice's escape; and it was proved that he had been constantly in the habit of walking up and down the Ouden Zac, the Rozendael, and several other neighbouring streets, for some weeks before, with eyes fixed on the various parts of the convent, as if watching for some one inside, or calculating the means of their evasion.

To these statements, Renault Claassen, on his examination before the governor and the burgomaster, gave a ready assent: but he utterly denied the inference drawn by them, that he was the violator of the sanctuary, and the novice's paramour. Disappointed as they had hitherto been, they were, however, too happy of a plausible pretext for obtaining such a victim as the son of a recusant, so obnoxious to the enmity of the Spanish faction, of which the then burgomaster formed a part. It was in vain that Renault protested his innocence, declared that he had never even seen Beatrice, and confessed that the object of his observation and anxiety was no other than Theresa Van Rozenhoed, whom he had from time to time remarked with her father in the streets, and listened to as she sang and practised her cithern in the convent, for whom he had conceived a passion, but a passion without hope, in consequence of the hostile feelings reciprocally held by their parents, their difference of religion, and other insurmountable obstacles.

This defence soon spread abroad, but it created little effect in any but those of his own party, except in the breast of Theresa. Enough has been told of her character, to explain the many-springing sensations it must have excited. Her love of justice, her hatred of tyranny, her abhorrence of Trovaldo, and as strong as all, perhaps, her sensibility to admiration, were enlisted in favour of the innocent man. She did not hesitate a moment as to what she should do; but sending for her father, and her confessor the prior, she told them both, in presence of the abbess, every circumstance that she was informed of concerning the flight of Beatrice. The hour at which it took place was indubitable evidence of Renault Claassen's innocence, for those who proved *against* him (as his ready judges choose to term their neutral evidence) averred that they saw him at midnight walking under the convent walls. Theresa declared her intention of being on no account withheld from appearing before the members of the secret inquest

by whom he was tried. The abbess felt somewhat scandalised at this decision ; the prior discountenanced it ; but Siger Van Rozenhoed, like an honest man and a fair enemy, gave it his full approval. In consequence of this, Theresa appeared before the little tribunal, assembled in the governor's apartment ; Renault Claassen having previously received intimation of the good fortune that awaited him. Theresa was accompanied by her father, with the abbess and the prior, neither of whom could refuse their attendance at Van Rozenhoed's request ; and Theresa's steady and consistent evidence, in spite of her abashed and diffident demeanour, and the secret wishes of the governor, bishop, and burgomaster, fairly acquitted the culprit.

The effects of these proceedings were manifold : Claas Claassen, who loved his son, could not resist the temporary feeling of gratitude which prompted him to aid in the election of his old rival : Renault was, beyond all hope of cure, enamoured of his fair deliverer ; and Theresa herself, who was greatly struck with the evident feelings he displayed, was, as one of the results of the affair, pronounced liable to prosecution, as an abettor of the guilt of Beatrice and her seducer.

This part of the business was, however, merely thrown out as a threat by Trovaldo, and as quickly abandoned, on condition that he should be allowed to enter the lists as a suitor to Theresa, little doubting that his influence would soon carry the point, against the numerous rivals which her wealth and beauty were sure to generate.

Van Rozenhoed hesitated for awhile at this proposal. His hatred of the Spaniards, and his personal antipathy to the governor, urged him to give a direct refusal. But apprehension of his power, and a dread of compromising his daughter's reputation, decided him to follow the prior's advice, and accept the proffered terms ; particularly as the oracular voice of the monk assured him he possessed an infallible method of baffling Trovaldo's views. Almost simultaneously with this assurance, he proposed his nephew to be Siger's apprentice ; but without the most distant hint as to that being the means he alluded to.

Van Rozenhoed felt himself personally wounded by the outrage committed against the sacred house of which he had been the founder ; and he would have gone any reasonable lengths to bring the guilty persons to punishment. He acquitted his daughter of any blame in the transaction, but he saw her dan-

ger, and he determined to bring her home, as soon as it was possible to make suitable arrangements for her fitting reception at Rozenhoed House. The bustle of the approaching election retarded this awhile, but at length it was over—he was chosen burgomaster; and then it was that he began to feel those qualms upon the subject, avowed to the prior in their garden conversation, and soon dissipated, as the reader will recollect, by the skilful hint which the prior threw out as to the possibility of Prince Maurice himself, the stadtholder, generalissimo and high admiral of the United Provinces, shortly making his appearance in Bruges.

It was under these circumstances that Theresa entered into her home at Rozenhoed House, and took more peculiar possession of the northern turret, allotted especially to her use.

CHAPTER V.

ON the night on which Theresa's father affectionately installed her as the mistress of her new home, a scene of a different nature was acting in the private apartments of Don Juan de Trovaldo, in the government mansion, the garden of which was separated by the little canal from that of Rozenhoed House.

Trovaldo, whose dark mind had been in a state of constant ferment since the discovery of Beatrice's flight, now hurriedly paced the cabinet, which opened from his sleeping chamber, while the Venetian mirror, hanging against the wall, showed him his gaunt figure as he strided past, and the fierce play of his features, which were moved with no common excitement. The lamp of richly worked bronze, suspended from the ceiling, threw its light broadly on the room; and the shadow of the governor moved along the walls, the floor, and through the open casement on the garden below. He occasionally stopped before the mirror, and gazed at the reflection of his countenance, lowering in dark delight, as a magician might contemplate the imp he had conjured up, embodying the likeness of his evil thoughts.

“At length she shall be mine, in spite of fate itself!” cried Trovaldo, rubbing his hands together, and alternately passing one of them across his forehead, or stroking his beard towards a point. “I have found her hiding-place—discovered her paramour—broken through the mystery of her cunning and her guilt. She shall be mine for vengeance, if not for enjoyment; and he who has dared to come between me and mine own, to brave my power and baulk my will, his fate is sealed.”

With these words, the governor rang a silver hand bell which stood on the high mantel-piece, and the soft tone of which proved it to be meant for some closer attendant than the mere varlets of his household, who occupied a distant hall in the mansion. Almost as soon as he could replace the bell, an opening was made in the tapestry which covered the walls, and a man came forward through a small door, cunningly concealed from common observation. It was Gaspar, the Moriscoe, who appeared at the governor’s summons. He stopped close to the secret door, which of itself closed behind him, leaving no appearance of an outlet in that part of the room. He was dressed in the usual costume of a Spanish serving man, without any visible badge of slavery, except an air of degradation in his mien and countenance, while he stood before his haughty master. His pale olive complexion looked mean in comparison with the bronzed face that confronted him, particularly from the want of beard and whiskers, which so profusely covered *it*; and while Trovaldo’s frizzled hair curled thickly on his shoulders, according to the fashion of the time, Gaspar’s black locks hung sleekly down his back. His stature was of the middle size, but it looked diminutive beside his master’s commanding height; and the large and swarthy features of the latter were markedly opposed to the thin-edged outlines which were presented by Gaspar’s profile. Yet his aquiline nose, curved nostrils, and well-cut mouth, spoke a firmness and decision more than common: his eye looked piercingly bright in its dark tranquillity; and his high clear forehead bespoke a mind, far keener and stronger than that of the personification of power and passion who stood before him, and whom he held in awe.

Gaspar the Moriscoe feared but one man on earth—his

master. He knew many of the causes he had to hate him ; his father's death, his mother's dishonour, his own degradation ; he *did* hate him, yet he had often, when a mere boy, fought by his side, and more than once saved his life. He had had that life in his power hundreds of times, when a dagger, while Trovaldo slept, or poison, as he drank, might at once have revenged his own and his family's wrongs : but he never had thought of such a means. A mechanical dread had grown up with him from infancy ; an artificial instinct of servility, if it may be so called, was interwoven with his nature ; and even when he knew his superiority and felt it, when he despised his tyrant as thoroughly as he abhorred him, he still obeyed, and trembled ; for he sunk under the power that palsies alike the force of individuals and nations—the spell of slavery was round him.

“ Come boldly in, man ; here, close to me,” said the governor, as Gaspar silently stood at his usual respectful distance, waiting the commands of his master, who had flung himself into a high-backed chair of carved oak, corresponding in material and workmanship to the other articles of furniture.

“ Come forward, I say, Gaspar,” continued he : “ walk like a free man, bold and firm ; thy hour of liberty is nigh.”

A slight start, and a passing contraction of the brows and lips, the latter movement somewhat resembling a smile, were the tokens that the Moriscoe heard and understood his master.

“ What, Gaspar, has that word no meaning for thee ? Dost thou not snuff the gale of freedom, blowing fully towards thee ? ”

“ Don Juan, I am not yet free,” replied the Moriscoe ; “ I know your state, and my own station.”

“ Tut, tut, man, thou art too nice. Thou mayest surely move when thy good fortune moves, and meet it half way.”

“ Alas ! 't is a deception, senor ! The promised blessing flies from me, as I pursue ; all hope of success is vain.”

“ I tell thee, Gaspar, once and for all, the charter of manumission is nearer than thou thinkest.”

“ How far ? ” asked the slave, with a despairing and sarcastic smile.

“ The length of thy dagger's blade.”

“ Hah ! ” exclaimed Gaspar, seizing the dagger, and ad-

vancing three or four paces, while his eye seemed to measure the governor's body as the fitting sheath for his weapon.

"Right, Gaspar, right," cried Trovaldo, with a look so confident, as instantly to check the impulse that prompted the Moriscoe's thoughts. The upraised hand fell down, and the dagger seemed mechanically to slip into its usual place, as the governor continued,—

"This is the spirit I wish to revive—that is the look and attitude I love to see thee wear. Art thou ready to avenge thy sister, to walk abroad in freedom?"

"Point out the way—name my victim—Beatrice shall be revenged, and my soul and body free."

"Spoken like the man thou hast been, and worthy of what thou wilt prove thyself anon. That is the slight but sinewy arm that struck down the Dutchman at Gertruydenburg, when his arquebuss was pointed at my head. Thy present bearing, Gaspar, reminds me of thee in that bloody day. Thou art now again in arms, for the best united causes that can nerve a man—honour and freedom!"

"Don Juan, your excitements torture me; let me act! who is my sister's seducer? where, where is she? and *he*?" This last word was uttered with fierce emphasis, and his eyes seemed urged beyond their sockets by the force of his emotion.

"Come closer then—every word I utter lessens the distance between us—one blow will make us equal."

The looks of the Moriscoe once more changed to a sullen desperation, and his hand grasped his weapon's hilt. But this was a momentary act, and he did not advance his foot.

"Who am I to strike?" asked he gloomily.

"Listen," replied Trovaldo, placing his broad hand on his chest. "If thou hadst but to raise thy arm and strike, this breast had been thy mark. Nay, Gaspar, look not so fearfully resolved; the time is not yet come. Thou hast much to dare, and to overcome, before the deed can be done. Thy foe is no common one."

"Nor my *cause*, senor! I am able to contend with any thing: it is futile to work me up to a higher pitch. Who, and what is this man?"

"Hast thou not heard of De Bassenvelt, chief of the black Walloons?"

"Who, Count Ivon? I have, *senor*."

"Dost thou shrink, Gaspar, from that name?"

"The question dishonours my whole race. But what do I say? How durst I talk of honour — am I not a slave?"

"The point of thy blade in Count Ivon's heart will start a stream to wash out all stains, good Gaspar. Beatrice lies this night within his arms."

"Hell and furies!" cried the Moriscoe, fiercely stamping, pressing his clenched fists against his forehead, and gnashing his teeth.

"Ay, let it move thee as it ought — let it stir up every drop of Andalusian blood — let it rankle in thy heart!"

"It does, it does, *senor*, I am ready for my work. Where is De Bassenvelt? let me rush against his throat!"

Trovaldo rose from his seat, and replied, "Not so, not so: softly, good Gaspar. Thou rememberest, when thou wert a child we saw together in Africa a lion steal upon a negro. He sprang on his prey, when sure of being within his reach. But he wound on and followed him ere then, through brake and bush; moved when he moved, stopped when he stopped, crouched, rose up, crept close — his eye fixed, his jaws apart, with trembling limbs and panting chest; but when *sure* of him, Gaspar, he bounded on the wretch, struck him down, and plunged his tusks——" Ere the sentence was thus broken, the half-maddened Moriscoe, who had, step by step, enacted his master's words, as the latter paced the room, leapt forward, as if in the very act of the fierce animal's bound, so theatrically described by the governor.

"Halloa! hold, fellow!" exclaimed Trovaldo, standing up erect, and seizing his slave at full arm's length, at the moment in which he was actively darting upon him.

"What does this mean, Gaspar? Why thou art frenzy-struck on the head of thy revenge?"

"Forgive, forgive me, honoured master, I am, indeed, frantic; you have made me less rational than man, ay, than the very brute you spoke of," said the slave, affrighted at his self-forgetfulness, and falling at Trovaldo's feet.

"Rise, Gaspar; that posture becomes thee not. Up, up! 'Tis not for him who has freedom in his reach to crouch before man," said the governor.

"Except like the lion, about to spring upon his prey," ex-

claimed Gaspar, quickly starting up; and adding with a ghastly smile, "Thus I will bound upon De Bassenvelt!" he darted towards the wall, and struck his dagger through the tapestry which covered it.

"Traitor!" cried he, without seeking reason for the application of this readiest epithet of reproach.

"Traitor, indeed!" said the governor, hoarsely laughing at this action of his furious bondsman; "thou hast pierced Judas, and torn the master-piece of Jans's loom."

And, in fact, Gaspar had in his abstraction inflicted a serious wound on the body of the traitor disciple, in a beautiful copy of Leonardo da Vinci's "Last Supper," worked by the celebrated founder of the Gobelins, who had lately left Bruges, his native town, to settle in Paris, at the pressing invitation of Henry IV. The clumsy stitching up of the rent in the faded tapestry is evident at the present time.

Trovaldo's laugh brought the Moriscoe to a sense of the ludicrous part into which his violence had hurried him; and as if abashed, or for the purpose of calming his fermented thoughts, he placed his open hands across his eyes, and stood motionless for a while.

"Rouse up, Gaspar, rouse thee, and hearken to the means of tracking thy sister's paramour," said the governor; and as Gaspar listened, with an attention as intense, but not so violent, as before, he gave him minute instructions for his journey to the castle of Welbasch on the banks of the Meuse, in the Walloon country, and on the skirts of Eastern Brabant.

"There, in his fancied safety, lies the libertine with his associate band, not less profligate than he is. Darest thou penetrate into that strong hold? Wilt thou there do the deed — there strike him to the heart, encircled by his lawless troop, even in thy polluted sister's arms?"

"Ay, both with one blow," uttered Gaspar, in a gloomy steadiness of tone widely contrasted with his late vehemence.

"What dost thou say, Gaspar? not *both*, not thy own flesh and blood! Beware, man, lest thou goest too far. Remember, thou killest De Bassenvelt for me: Beatrice is the child, the property, the right of our holy church."

"Kill him for you, Don Juan! I find that even now

you know me not. I am your slave, 'tis true, but not your sword blade. I kill, senor, but for myself—for my own wrong, or in my line of duty—but I am no man's bravo, not even yours, my master; and as for Beatrice, she must die: not to revenge the church, but to retrieve her fame. Death must stand in the stead of honour; and whose but her brother's hand shall consummate the sacrifice?"

"Gaspar, this cannot be; Beatrice must be reserved, an offering to the religion she has outraged. Pledge thyself to do her no harm, or thou quittest me not. Some other hand shall snatch the glorious vengeance that should have been thine; and I swear by the host of saints, thou shalt rest a slave for ever."

"That's a long term of bondage, Don Juan," calmly answered Gaspar, with a smile so bitterly contemptuous, as to be reconciled with his late servility, only by our experience of the degrading vacillation of human nature. He added in a similar tone, and a gesture that gave force to his words, "The dagger that may kill a freeman can set a bondsman free."

"Come, come, good Gaspar—no more of this," said the governor, with haughty condescension. "I know thou art brave to recklessness; but life is worth its value, is it not?"

"And is not death, senor, honourable death? But when that pays the price of freedom, what can estimate its value? The wealth of a thousand worlds, the purchase of a thousand lives, fall short of the good it buys, and necessarily reach not its intrinsic worth."

"Thou art a subtle reasoner, Gaspar, and I leave to thee this estimate. I know not the abstract worth of liberty."

"Because you never knew its loss."

"Well, well, so be it! This is no time for mootings points like that—thy sister!"

"Ha! true, I know what you would add. Beatrice is free, but her's is the liberty of guilt, *mine* shall be gained with honour—let me away then—I am ready."

"Well then we are agreed: one culprit sacrificed to thy just revenge, the other is left to the church. Thou swearest not to harm thy sister?"

"I swear it, senor: I will spare her life."

"Now then to horse, good Gaspar! Take the brown Flemish gelding, that I seized from the disbanded captain of

the lancers of St. Mark: thy own Andalusian steed might suggest uneasy questions. Thou art a soldier of the lancers, mark me, discontented with the dulness of this garrison, and longing to exchange its sluggard duties for active service under De Bassenvelt. Procure a uniform suit. Arm thyself well; ride on — here is thy pass, all ready — Antonio Laredo is thy name. Go freely on, thou hast no hinderance to encounter. At the outermost guard of Brussels, a fresh horse will be furnished in virtue of this pass. On the left bank of the Meuse, right opposite to the castle of Welbasch, where thou canst well arrive by sunset to-morrow, an alder grove stretches across the marsh from the river's bank; wait there until a boat is put forward by a man, just as twilight becomes extinct, and darkness is setting in. He will be dressed in a light blue doublet, trimmed with fur, and a cap of the same. His face may be concealed; if so, make no remark, nor question him in aught. But hand him this ring, graven with the head of our late illustrious monarch, Philip. Follow his instructions, and they will lead thee to the easy consummation of thy task. Now then, farewell. There is my open casket, take money for thy wants, and away!"

"They will be few for a man who may die within a day or two," said Gaspar, taking some gold pieces.

"What rustling is that? Is the wind rising?" asked Trovaldo, abruptly moving towards the half open casement; and as he put forth his head, he continued, "No, all is calm. Perhaps some passing breeze just shook the old chestnut tree;" and as Gaspar looked forward, he observed the branches close to the window still vibrating, as though some sudden movement had shaken them.

"How solemn the night looks," said Trovaldo.

"'Tis dark and still," replied the slave.

"Fitting thy enterprise, my brave Gaspar."

"Daylight or gloom are all the same to me, senor; I am neither ashamed nor afraid."

"How tranquil every thing looks! Heaven and earth seem to sleep. The water alone shows life, as the beam of my lamp dances through it. And see! look at Van Rozenhoed's turret, Gaspar; it is lighted up; there are people moving there. By my poniard's hilt" (and he raised the weapon, and pressed its cruciform handle to his lips,) "it is

Theresa that walks to and fro, with her duenna. She has then left the convent and come home. By and by my thoughts must turn to her. Hark ! 'tis music — some low-bred burghers welcoming their magistrate's daughter."

As Trovaldo leant from the stone balcony that hung beyond his window, and Gaspar stood beside him, the following stanza was sung, in the French language, in a full toned but delicate voice, being neatly accompanied on a Spanish guitar. It was from a well known romance of Dirk Coornhert — the Secretary to the States General of Holland, addressed by him to his imprisoned mistress, Melinsenda, Countess of Velthen, and full of the fanciful conceits of the times : —

Wake not, maiden ! stilly lie,
With lids sleep-laden, humid eye,
And lips apart ;
Emblems of a mind at rest,
Feeling breast,
And open heart.

" By Heaven, though," exclaimed Trovaldo, as the stanza was finished, " that is no mean musician ! Young Claassen, and such as he, would have raised a coarser strain. Hist ! Gaspar, he begins anew."

" Pardon, senor, I have no soul for music now. Its sounds distract me. I must away."

" Begone, then ; and Heaven prosper thy revenge !"

The Moriscoe bowed profoundly, and retired through the private entrance. Trovaldo turned again into the balcony ; and bending on the balustrade, listened as acutely to the song, thus continued, as though unconscious that he had just despatched an agent to commit a murder.

Thou art risen — as the lark,
In wiry prison, lone and dark,
That flaps its wing
With sad time-keeping 'gainst the cage ;
Is it in rage
That free birds sing ?

No, ladye ! rather like the dove,
Whose charm'd ears gather notes of love,
In its soft nest,
Thou hearkenest to the murmuring soft
Sent up aloft
From a true breast.

" How sweetly, how feelingly this fellow sings !" exclaimed the governor. But he was not the only listener. One of the little casements of the opposite turret showed a female form,

leaning through it, from the moment that the prelude was struck on the instrument.

"Where can this voice come from, and whose is it?" asked Trovaldo to himself. "What! am I moved at this? Already *jealous*, and of a sound? For shame — for shame! No, this fair girl must not distract me from the deep object next my heart, much less her vulgar serenaders. Ah! there the fellow goes, 'no doubt,'" and his eyes strained to observe the motion of a little boat, that softly glided down the canal, towards the Dominican cloister.

In a few minutes more, another serenade was begun, but of a kind less pleasing than the last. Instead of the simple melody of one sweet voice and the vibration of a single instrument slightly touched, the harmony of several, and the chorus of three or four singers, broke across the water from Rozenhoed Quay, where the performers were stationed.

"Ay," cried the governor, "there go the noisy throats of the coarse citizens. *That* suits the taste of the young tanner, perhaps, but not mine. Paltry fellows all, single or in herds! When *I* sound my amorous wooing to the fair, the *rich* Theresa, it shall be with a flourish of trumpets!"

With these words, he retired from the window, closed it loudly behind him, stamped on the floor for one of his personal attendants, and passed into his sleeping-room.

It would appear, that the crash of the band harmonised as little with the feeling of the turret's fair tenant; for the figure withdrew from the casement, and the light moved away into another room.

CHAPTER VI.

GASPAR was soon equipped in his assumed character, mounted on his horse, and close to the gate of the city, which led to the Ghent Road. But previous to its being opened to admit of his exit, the necessary forms of examining his pass and entering it in the night's report were to be gone through by the officer of the guard. While these proceedings were going on,

Gaspar perceived a man, who stood at the guard-house door, holding the bridle of a horse, and apparently waiting for the lowering of the drawbridge, which was to admit of his also passing from the town. He wore a cloak with a high standing collar buttoned close above his chin; his face was amply concealed by a broad-leafed brown beaver hat, such as the Spaniards call a sombrero. Gaspar, with his natural acuteness and suspicion, watched this figure closely; but he could only discover, or fancy he discovered, that the stranger contrived to keep his head turned, so as to have an eye fixed on *him*, as he went through the formalities above mentioned.

When all was finished the guard was ordered to turn out under arms; the sentinels on the walls above were warned to look sharply forward, to see that all was right beyond the ramparts; the ponderous gates then creaked back on their hinges; the drawbridge came clanking down into its grooves; and the way was ready for the two travellers.

"Mount, cavaliers," said the sergeant of the guard; "it is lucky that ye travel the same road, for good company cheers a dark night; and if you fall in with the Picaroons, between the Senne and the Sambre, why one of you may have a chance to gallop back, to tell that the other is defunct."

Neither of the travellers seemed to relish this coarse attempt at pleasantry, for they maintained a complete silence, and they merely waved their hands, as they passed through the portcullis, in return to the audible civilities of the sergeant, the porter, and his assistants.

As soon as the noise of the chains hauling up the bridge, and of the bolts and bars fastening the gates, had subsided, and the outer defences of the place were cleared, the stranger seemed to throw off his reserve, but not his concealment.

He turned towards Gaspar and addressed him, his voice betokening a considerable degree of hoarseness, real or feigned.

"So it seems we journey the same road, senor?" said he, in Spanish, in a doubtful tone of interrogatory or mere remark.

Gaspar, who did not feel inclined to enter into conversation, chose to take it in the latter sense, and made no reply.

"I ask many pardons, signior," returned the stranger, in Italian, "I thought you were a countryman of our noble governor there; but I suppose you come from beyond the Alps?"

This was a more palpable question than the last ; yet Gaspar, who knew its purport, though he did not understand the language well, felt himself absolved from any obligation to notice it.

“ What, mistaken again ! ” exclaimed the horseman, and now speaking French, “ *ventre St. Gris !* ” (an oath just before then made fashionable by the great Henry,) “ if monsieur be not French, my stock of language is spent, unless, indeed, he can smatter the patois of the Walloon country. But if Holland or England boasts the honour of his birth, I can do little in their tongues. I can say, *mynheer* in the one, and *master* in the other, and that goes but a short way in a night’s march. Come, *senor*,” added he, spurring his horse close to Gaspar’s, and once more addressing him in Spanish, “ let’s be sociable — we are going further together than you think, and our errands may not be wide of the same mark either. Let me whisper one word in your ear — Beatrice ! ”

As the man had pressed towards him, Gaspar instinctively grasped a petronel, a kind of huge pistol, that filled one of his holsters ; but the last sentence made him pause with surprise, the concluding word caused him suddenly to start in his saddle, and as he pulled up his bridle the well trained steed stepped short. The stranger followed the movement, and reined in his horse : then, putting his head still closer to the Moriscoe, he added, —

“ Why should a word of friendship or a name of kindred startle you, *senor* ? — your hand on our joint success, our purpose is the same.”

“ How’s this ? What mean you ? ” asked the wary Moriscoe, recovering his self-command.

“ Mean ? why to do what you are about to do, — to reach the castle of Welbasch, soon and secretly — need I add the rest ? ”

“ Don Juan said nought of such a one as you,” replied Gaspar, still doubtingly, but excited to a partial indiscretion, by the stranger’s last allusion.

“ Yes, but he did though. Might I not be known on horseback, as well as in a boat ? Is not a brown cloak as good a token as a furred doublet ? If my zeal brought me to meet you on land, am I less genuine than if I had found you on water ? ”

"Why this concealment of your person?"

"Did not Don Juan prepare you for that? Why do *you* change your appearance, your name and apparel? I ask no reply to my questions — let yours rest unanswered: we shall know each other when our poniards clash in De Bassenvelt's body! Your hand, *senor*!"

"Take it," cried Gaspar, with nervous emotion; "I can have no further scruples. Pardon my hesitation — but mystery begets distrust——"

"And ensures success; so let us travel on together, darkly, but confidentially: we are as one man."

"Lead me to my revenge, and I am yours for ever!"

"We shall go together, Gaspar: no leading, no following; our object is the redress of Beatrice's wrongs, and the punishment of him who sought her ruin."

"Who completed it!" exclaimed Gaspar.

"As you like," said the stranger.

"Would that it might be as I like," muttered Gaspar.

"It *shall* be so!" replied the stranger, with a deep emphasis that bespoke power as well as promise.

The companions journeyed on during the whole night. They stopped but once, to bait their horses, in a solitary part of the country between Bruges and Ghent, which is now a thickly inhabited and cultivated district, intersected by the great canal, which had then made some advances from either end, but was, as yet, unfinished.

Being both well mounted, they had made considerable progress along the causeway they had so far travelled, and their horses showed but little fatigue as they ravenously attacked the mixed mess of oats, beans, and brown bread, prepared for them under the inspection of their riders. Gaspar saw that his companion was no stranger at the lone cottage where, by his recommendation, they had halted. The man who owned it seemed to expect him. It was not yet daylight when they arrived; yet he was up, and ready for the reception of at least one guest. A rude repast was spread on the kitchen table, and the fire-balls, composed of moistened slack and clay hardened in the sun, were blazing hotly, if not cheerfully, on the hearth.

Still, no words were interchanged that avowed any acquaintanceship; and after both men and beasts had had a hearty meal and an hour's repose they were once more on the road.

During the remaining time of their continuance in company, as well as previously to the stoppage just mentioned, Gaspar and his companion had held much converse together, with occasional pauses, as each sunk into the depths of unuttered thought. The Moriscoe more frequently than the other lapsed into silence. The dark purpose within him seemed to draw every faculty into its vortex. If the stranger had an equal weight on his mind, it sat more lightly there. His fits of silence were short, his conversation fluent, his questions acute, and his allusion to De Bassenvelt, of whom he had avowed himself the intended assassin, bore none of the virulence which might be thought to form a component part of his design and its impulse. Gaspar, at times, felt uncertain as to his companion, and doubted his fitness for the task; but he was reassured again by the air of careless decision which marked the stranger's words and manner. He had, in fact, begun already to feel the superiority of this man, without its being at all obtruded on him. He seemed carried away in the current of his enquiries and remarks. He answered his minutest question as to the habits and feelings of Don Juan de Trovaldo, and as to the temper and state of the garrison of Bruges, with a facility and a sort of obedience that seemed due only to the commands of a master; and if Gaspar was by chance occasionally close or hesitating in his replies, some skilful turn of subject, or hint of their joint object, or a sentence in open praise of Beatrice (of whom the stranger spoke all through with a tone of deep sincerity), was sure to bring him to his purpose, which he thus attained, as a river reaches the sea, by continuous windings round every obstruction, steadily pursuing, while apparently changing, its course.

Daylight brought with it no abatement in the stranger's caution: it added to it the rather; and Gaspar found it impossible to obtain a sight of his face, or even his person, so closely were they concealed by his large horseman's cloak and slouched hat. He did not know, in fact, whether he was travelling with an old man or a young one, a fat one or a lean, and not positively whether he was tall or short; but on the latter point he could venture to decide, to his own satisfaction, that the stranger was not remarkably the one or the other. While he sat in his saddle, and when he dismounted from his horse, he appeared to be of that happy middle height which

enables men to go through life on a level with their fellows—a particular advantage for those who shuffle through it in disguise and mystery, as seemed clearly the case with the subject of our and Gaspar's remarks.

They had ridden twelve hours, including a second stoppage for the refreshment of their horses; and they had passed within view of the tall spires of Brussels, which lay low to the left, the city not having at that time crept quite to the summit of the hill, which is now covered by its most beautiful streets and squares, but which was then occupied by a large extent of park, where game was shot, and deer were hunted by the archduke and the courtiers, as engravings of the period still attest.

The travellers arrived at Grand Bygard, the station appointed by Don Juan for Gaspar's change of horse. This had now become a necessary measure; for the one he rode, though a gallant one, was beginning to flag after his long journey. The stranger and his steed, which was of a lighter and finer breed than Gaspar's, showed no symptoms of fatigue. Both seemed as fresh for the road, after a slight repast suited to their separate tastes, as if they had not travelled a league, yet they had gone full twenty; and they seemed as if ready to double the distance, when they re-appeared at the skirts of the forest Soignies, (or the *Sonien Bosch**, as it is still called in the native language,) where the stranger had given Gaspar rendezvous. For he did not approach the military post, at which the latter had presented himself in virtue of Don Juan's pass; but took a road that led into the forest, saying that he knew where to provide himself and his good beast with all that they required.

The Senne was now fairly passed, and the way lay straight before them to the Sambre, which Gaspar's directions told him to cross, a couple of leagues above its confluence with the Meuse, under the ramparts of Namur. He would then fall into a road leading in almost a direct line across the hilly country, beyond which the last-mentioned river winds along in imbedded beauty, between wooded acclivities that slope up gradually from teeming meadows, or naked rocks that shoot perpendicularly from the water's edge, and throw their shadows far across the stream.

“Well, Gaspar, we approach the term of our journey,” said

* Forest of the Sun: the probable remains of some old idolatry.

the stranger familiarly, as they emerged from a narrow path, which led through the intricacies of the forest.

"Your new steed, though not worth the last, is a good one, and it may stand you in need. Fresh horse fresh courage, as the old proverb of Hembyse says—you know the picaroons are abroad; by and by we shall be in their peculiar district."

"I am prepared to meet risks; the whole of this Walloon country is infested with them, is it not?"

"Not all. The banks of the Meuse are free, thanks to De Bassenvelt and his black chasseurs."

"Thanks to him, senor! I should not have expected that courtesy from your lips."

"Come, come, let's give even the devil his due, Gaspar. He has done good service, in scouring the country and driving these ruffian hordes before him."

"I know nought of him but his name and his *crime*, for which my hand——"

"Well, well, let him die for justice sake if he be guilty, but——"

"If he be guilty!" exclaimed Gaspar, interrupting, in his turn, the stranger's expression.

"Yes, *if*, Gaspar. Let us examine things scrupulously; what proof have you of his guilt?"

"My *master's* word," answered the Moriscoe, bitterly.

"Good proof, no doubt," said the stranger, with something (at least Gaspar thought so) of a sneer, conveyed even in the expression of his feigned voice, "good proof; but what is his authority?"

"That I know not; nor is it my wont to question, or examine into, his assertions. I should have thought that *you* were more in his confidence on this point; and haply it is you that may best answer your own demand."

"Spoken like a trustworthy friend, rather than an unemancipated servitor," briskly exclaimed the stranger. "This was but to try you, comrade, and in somewise, perhaps, to probe Don Juan's depth. I see he has not gone too far. All's well, then—you have your task to perform—do it, but do it discreetly. Let not your feelings hurry you away; strike no blow till I strike with you. It must not only be struck *home*, but we must be held as harmless."

"I have no fear of results," said Gaspar, sullenly.

"But others must be considered as well as self," added the stranger. "Beatrice's safety and Trovaldo's character must neither be compromised. Were you disavowed as the doer, the deed would be visited on them. Besides, I too am entitled to a share in the act; you know not yet how closely I am concerned in this."

"That is your own affair, senor; I ask but one blow — the first! follow it up as you please. I will act under your guidance till my naked knife is in my upraised hand — then I am free!"

"So far so well," said the stranger. "Now, Gaspar, we understand each other quite."

"You know me thoroughly, senor, but ——"

"No *buts*, good Gaspar: you cavilled at my *ifs*; wait patiently awhile, I will unfold myself in proper season," remarked the stranger, in his usual abrupt way of cutting short the Moriscoe's sentences; but he added, in a more serious one, — "and now then, hold well to your saddle, and keep your horse in hand: let your spurs feel his flanks, and have eyes and ears for all around. We are step by step entering into the outlaws' own domain. In these intricate passes of ravine, and wood, and wild, not even may Bassenvelt's chasseurs cope with them."

"And should we fall in with these brigands, what course may be best pursued, senor?"

"That to which your horse's head may at the time be pointed. At the first sight or sound of the freebooters, fly, friend Gaspar! Firm fixed knees, heels well set, tight hand and cool head, is then the order of the minute. Forward, away! is the word. But a turn of your beast's head, ay, or of your own, comrade, will be waste of time, that may bring loss of life. Let no picaroon reach as far as your crupper, or by the mass you are a dead man, Gaspar!"

"You know these robbers well it would seem, senor?"

"Ay, and they know me; for which reason, if we fall in with them, neither you nor I must stand on ceremony. Each for each! must be then the cry, and so we may chance to separate."

"And what then, senor?" asked Gaspar.

"Why, then, if their rapiers cannot reach, or their petronels overtake us, we dash on as we may, pass the Sambre as we

can, and make the Meuse at our leisure. You know your rendezvous, the Alder Grove opposite the castle of Welbasch? If the boat does not come by twilight to the spot, you may judge that some ill has befallen your pilot. Then shift for yourself, and forget me."

"We must hope the best, senor; I have no fear of the brigands for myself, and less for you: your horse seems one that nought can tire, and few can come up with."

"My horse! Yes, he is a good one—a true Arab—pure blood—high mettle—fleet foot; a beast beyond price." And as the stranger said this, he patted affectionately the neck of the animal, which acknowledged the kindness by a whinnying reply, and a snort, as he tossed his head up and down.

"Hush! hush!" said the rider, roughly slapping his hand against the neck he had before so gently stroked; "this is no time for talk, Rolando: that voice of yours in a picaroon's ear would sound like a warning-trumpet."

"It would take no small count of florins, senor, to buy your favourite from you," said Gaspar.

"Three thousand have been offered, but failed to tempt me, Gaspar. But take one word more of caution from me. Should we part sooner than we think of, and that fate lets us meet again at our appointed station, nothing may pass between us to denote we had met before. Step into the boat, and speak if I speak, but not even in a whisper, in allusion to this journey. The very stream has ears for De Bassenvelt. All within sight of his castle seems to have hearing for his service. Don Juan warned you, did he not, that your guide might use concealment?"

"He did; I am prepared for that."

"Then let nought surprise you in this perilous enterprise. Keep a firm heart, and a cool head—once more I say it. And for both our sakes—for the sake of her who is dear and precious to us both—for the sake of justice, and the ensurance of a right revenge, swear to me by the holiest oath, that thou wilt not, under any circumstance, strike Bassenvelt's death-blow till *I say strike!*"

To this demand, which gained peculiar solemnity, from the deeply concealed voice that spoke it, Gaspar as solemnly replied, but in a tone of elevated firmness,—

"I swear by the faith of my father, by the revenge I have

vowed, by my love for my degraded sister, and my hatred for her undoer, to act as you desire ! I can make no stronger pledge."

" 'Tis more than enough. Once then again, thy hand — I know thee well, far better than thou canst believe ; and on no slight grounds I swear to thee, friendship, freedom, and happiness ! But, hark ! Dost thou hear nothing ? "

The sound of a not distant horn was clearly repeated. The stranger fixed himself in his seat, caught up his reins in his bridle hand, waved the other towards Gaspar, and exclaimed,—

" By Heaven, 'tis the picaroons' horn ! They are out and in force, or that blast would not affront the land. Keep my counsel, and your own courage, Gaspar. I cannot dally, nor risk a life on which the fate and fame of others is hanging. Farewell ! We must part here — you cannot follow me ; but singly we may both escape. Away, on your course ! "

With these words, the stranger turned his horse suddenly in the narrow road they travelled, the right hand side of which was bounded by steep hills, and the left by a wall of loose and rudely cut stones, that formed an enclosure without any opening as far as was to be seen, in either the direction they came, or that before them. At this wall, the stranger, without hesitation, ran his horse ; and in a moment the beautiful and highly trained animal sprang across, striking fire and dust from its topmost edge with his hind feet, which thus gave a new impetus to the bound that carried him beyond.

Gaspar rose in his stirrups, gazing in astonishment at the leap, which was of a height totally impracticable for the heavy war horse he rode. He strained to gain a view of the stranger across the wall, but in vain ; and two or three seconds elapsed ere he heard the horse land at the other side, while a voice, which seemed scarcely that he had so lately spoken with, halloed out, —

" Safe and sound, thanks to my saint, and to thee, Rolando ! Away, Gaspar, away ! "

The sounds of fleet galloping confirmed this hurried announcement, and brought quickly to the Moriscoe's mind the sense of his own danger. With the natural steadiness of a reflective temperament, he paused ; and calling up all the energy of caution with that of courage, a rush of recollection as to what had lately passed, and of cogitation as to what was

to be now done, flashed in a moment upon him ; a crowd of notions swept past him, leaving no palpable conviction behind. Could he have been betrayed ? Who was this stranger ? Some impostor — some creature of De Bassenvelt, duping Don Juan, and bent on removing *him*, and frustrating his revenge ? One of the very picaroons he seemed to shun, entrapping him into the toils ? What now to do ? Retreat ! abandon his enterprise ! Disgrace, worse than death, lay that way ; and the horns sounded now in that direction ! Away then in front ! Straight onward, through thick and thin !

Quick as the thought was formed, a petronel was pulled from its holster, and cocked in the right hand of the intrepid Moriscoe : his bridle, tightly held, employed the other ; and in a moment the brave steed was on his utmost stretch, the narrow pass in which he tore along ploughed up and echoing to his iron tread.

As he pressed forward, the sound of the horns ceased, at least he heard them not ; and he dashed on, for a time, without any hinderance or any evidence of danger. In a few minutes, however, the road suddenly opened out to the right and left. On the one side was a deep precipice, on the other a thick and apparently impenetrable wood. The extensive space between was covered with high grass at either side of the narrow road, which was again closely embraced by overhanging trees, at about one hundred yards opposite to the opening from which Gaspar now emerged. But no sooner did he find himself on the verge of this space than he reined in his horse so suddenly, that the animal, thrown back on his haunches, stood erect, plunged forward again, and gave ample work to all the rider's address in horsemanship to manage him. The cause of this sudden check was the pang of terrified surprise, with which Gaspar saw the whole of the space before him covered with the appalling proofs that he had rushed into the midst of the danger which he thought he fled from. Full twenty armed men, with their horses, seemed to occupy the place. Gaspar's hurried glance might have exaggerated the number ; and the loose manner in which they had scattered themselves over it, added perhaps to the illusion. But enough was there to make the bravest blood run chill.

Men and steeds were standing or lying at their pleasure, the latter grazing freely in the rich pasture ; some of the motley

band were snatching a repast of such provision as their haversacks afforded ; others slept in the shade of the trees, or lounged on the low wall that edged the precipice to the left, and seemed to contemplate the country below, which they were perhaps about to ravage. All bore witness of a halt, indulged without order or discipline, in contempt of precaution, or in confidence of security. Gaspar saw he was in the midst of the picaroons.

The moment that sufficed for these remarks was sufficient to fill the brigands with *their* portion of astonishment, conjecture, and alarm. Gaspar bore the uniform of a Spanish dragoon. No doubt could be entertained of his being aught but the advanced vidette of a detachment, sent out from the garrison of Brussels in their pursuit. This electric thought ran through the different groups. In a moment every man was on his feet, or springing into his saddle. Safety and flight were the only ideas for which each had room ; and this desperate troop of marauders was seized with a panic that the merest dastards might have shown. Some plunged on foot into the forests ; others cleared the wall, and scrambled down the precipice ; a few, who quickly mounted, galloped off on the very road which Gaspar meant to pursue.

His heart rose at the aspect of this confusion : but it sank as quickly, when he heard the blasts of the horn gaining on his rear ; and he felt all the peril of his situation, as he saw not far behind him an advance of the same ruffian freebooters as those whom his presence had dispersed. Despair has no ear for reflection. Like a wild beast bounding from his lair into the very toils of the hunters, did the Moriscoe now dart forward. The restive horse sprang out at the fierce pressure of the spurs ; and with head towards the earth, and long tail lashing his goaded sides, he plunged on with a speed the rider could no more control.

Thus flying and pursuing, in terror and in triumph, Gaspar was borne forward, and soon passed by several of the robbers, who seemed paralysed by fear. One only, the foremost of the fugitives, but the last of Gaspar's obstructions, either ashamed at having fled from a single foe, or resolved in despair to sell his life dearly, turned his horse's head, and drawing his long sword, seemed resolved to block up the passage. The Moriscoe's finger pressed on the trigger of his petronel,

and ere the sound could reach the robber's ear, he fell wounded to the earth.

The way seemed now clear, and Gaspar began to breathe more freely ; but the loud blasts of the horns behind him, the clatter of horses' feet, the shouts of the enraged stragglers, who discovered that they had fled from a single fugitive, kept his alarm at its height, and he still urged the almost exhausted horse to the top of his speed. He felt that his safety now depended upon that. But his feelings deceived him, for the chance of escape was past. He suddenly saw before him a large body of fresh assailants, who, warned by the signal sounds of the horn and by the clattering of coming hoofs, stood across the road, prepared for the approach of friend or foe. Gaspar now found he had nothing for it but to dash on. In a moment two or three carabines were discharged unerringly at their mark, and the brave courser that had bore him so far and so well fell dead under him ; and he rolled with the quivering carcass to and fro in the dust, till extricated by the robbers, who now rushed round him from all sides.

While some of them seized him, and dragged him up upon his feet, his eye was fixed on one, who by the air of resolute command, rather than any richness of apparel, seemed evidently the chief.

This man, having dismounted from his horse, stood calmly by, without speaking a word, while the Moriscoe was placed before him. One of the robbers, fancying that he read in this stern silence a not unwonted signal for the prisoner's death, drew his dagger, and was in the act of striking Gaspar to the heart, when the chieftain suddenly raised the long sword on which he leant, and with a powerful blow almost severed the man's arm from his body. As the intended murderer reeled from the shock, and let his weapon fall from his hand, the chief motioned to have him removed. A slight murmur ran through the band : but a stern look from him, while he placed his hand on one of the several pistols that filled his leathern girdle, instantly hushed the sound ; and at this moment three or four of the robbers came up, bearing the fellow whom Gaspar had wounded.

As soon as the captain saw this bleeding victim, he showed some slight and passing emotion, and he briefly demanded an explanation of the circumstances that had excited so much

alarm and brought Gaspar into his presence. The wounded man it appeared had had the command of the advanced party which Gaspar had surprised. He faintly answered the stern questions of the captain, who seemed intuitively to read the whole affair. As the explanation went on, a lowering frown settled on his brow, and little by little he drew the pistol from his belt and cocked it.

"Then, Jacob Wooperman, the case is this: First, you were surprised?" slowly asked the captain.

"I confess it," said the wounded man, as slowly.

"And then you fled?"

"I retreated on the main body."

"You *fled*—fled before a single man!"

"Be it as you like!" was the sullen answer to this fiercely uttered sentence, which sounded more like judgment than accusation.

"You all hear this?" said the captain, turning round to the assembled banditti.

"Yes, we do; we hear it; it is true;" and the like admissions were gloomily pronounced.

"Good!" exclaimed the captain; and then staring darkly on the wounded man, whose pale face and quivering lips showed a stronger emotion than that of mere bodily pain, he added,—

"To you I intrusted the command of our advance; our whole safety was in your care; you neglected it; our ruin might have followed; you fled, in panic and infamy; you are not worthy of life; it is doubly forfeited by the rules of our band."

He waved his hand to those who supported the culprit. They instantly obeyed the motion, and each quitted his hold. The trembling wretch staggered, and was falling to the ground, but ere his body sank on it, he was a corpse. A brace of bullets from the captain's pistol had been lodged in his breast; and this joint judge and executioner exclaimed,—

"Away with him, throw the black mantle on his carcass, and never let the name of the coward be even whispered among the brave."

A black cloak, profusely marked with blood in broad and clotted patches (the evidence of former murders), was instantly thrown over the body, in obedience to this morose and mer-

ciless order. The dark countenances around were fixed in stern observance.

Gaspar was petrified with horror at the scene ; and he was only awoke to consciousness by the rough grasp of two of the robbers, who bound a cord tightly round his arms, and bore him along, in obedience to the signal of the ruthless man who had just saved his life ; but, as it seemed, to prolong it for some more tedious termination than what he had dealt to his hapless lieutenant.

CHAPTER VII.

THE cold-blooded desperado who committed the act just recorded, was the notorious (or, as his other deeds have entitled him to be called in history,) the celebrated Martin Schenck. He was forced up into this rank celebrity by the heat of civil war, acting on a fierce and inflammable mind. He was one of those reckless bravos in whom boldness is mistaken for ambition, and brutality for valour. Animal courage he possessed to an odious excess, for it smothered the moral sense that should make men value life, and engendered a ferocity that is not a natural attribute of man. Blood and rapine were the revelries of Martin Schenck ; and he slept at night as soundly as if his hands had not reeked all day. His restless energy kept him constantly in action, but his acts were those of a bandit rather than a warrior ; yet he had served in the Spanish army, before the period at which we have introduced him, with great distinction. Rising from some obscure and unrecorded source, he had secured promotion and command. He surprised an important fortress ; and because the Spanish general refused him the government of a district, he turned from the side he had fought for, and became as ruthless a partisan in the cause of freedom, as he had been a ready instrument in the hands of tyranny.

In his personal character he was loathsome ; none of the graceful gallantry of chivalry softened down the fury of the mere soldier. He fought from impulse, not for fame. He

drank deeply, but from no social sentiment. Wine did not open his heart, nor relax his ferocity. He was never seen to smile. When most drunk, he was most reserved and collected; and, drunk or sober, he inflexibly did such savage deeds as those which we have pictured. Yet such was his influence over the fiercest men, that they submitted to him like children, and followed him like slaves.

Having quitted the Spanish service in gloomy hatred, he balanced for a while what step to take: but his rankling revenge threw him quickly into the occupation in which we now portray him. He joined one of the independent bands of outlaws, formed by deserters of all nations from the royalist troops; and he was ferociously hailed as their chief, by spirits congenial, though inferior, to his own.

Such was the man before whom Gaspar the Moriscoe was dragged, uncertain of the doom that might await him, and lost in bewildering conjectures as to the fearful individual, who in so short a space had been his protector, was his judge, and might become his destroyer.

As the chief strode on before him, Gaspar, close following, measured him with his eye. His height answered to the whisperings of suspicion which told him he gazed on no other than his late mysterious companion. He strove to recall the tones of the harsh voice which held converse with him so long; and comparing it with the unguarded accents that came up from beyond the wall after the horseman's desperate leap, he would have identified them with the gloomy sounds uttered by this man, in the hurried examination of the ill-fated wretch he had murdered.

But Gaspar could form no conclusion on the point. Ready as he was to steep his own hand in blood, to revenge an unproved wrong, yet he shrunk from the being who could remorselessly slay one associate and maim another, for offences or intentions not personal to himself. And again, considering the whole mien and conduct of this man, he could not bring himself to do such injustice to the free and social bearing of the strange horseman as to believe them one and the same.

The whole band of picaroons being now assembled and joined by the party whose sounding horns had at first so alarmed the Moriscoe, they composed a very formidable body. They were altogether not less than two hundred men; and

such men as might defy and strike terror into others double that number. Desperation was stamped on their mien ; and they looked the very spirit of the motto, worked on a red banner, which one of them carried :—

“ TO DARE IS TO DO ! ”

Mingled with the air of ruffian villany which pervaded the whole, there was also one of service, which proved them to be soldiers, however relaxed their discipline. Arms well kept, horses and accoutrements showing marks of care, and the remains of regular though various uniforms distinctly preserved, showed a pride in what they had been, and a readiness to resume their calling. For the present they stood aloof from both the contending parties ; holding themselves free to join with either, and in the mean time ravaging the country with atrocious impartiality.

After having walked a couple of hundred yards from the spot where Gaspar was captured, Schenck and his followers reached another small detachment of his troop, who were mounted and in good order, forming the rear-guard which he had there posted previous to the halt. Under the charge of this body was the slight baggage of the troop, consisting of a few rude tents, and large baskets of provender, with utensils for coarse cookery, some small barrels of gunpowder, bullets, and flints, and a quantity of spare arms of various kinds. These were slung across the backs of mules or horses ; and about a dozen of the least heavy sort of waggons, shaped in the solid clumsiness of those days, were appropriated to the conveyance of the sick and wounded, with half a dozen beings who looked of the doubtful gender, but who were really women ; and a squalid creature in the costume of the priesthood, of which he was a degraded member. Such a person was a constant appendage to troops like those before us. Robbers and murderers as they were, they were still strict Catholics in all the superstition of their sect ; and absolution at the hands of Fray Pedro, an unfrocked monk, and their flying chaplain, held them quite exempt to their own consciences from all other duties inculcated by Christianity, or the forms required by the church. This Spanish friar was ever ready to lay the salve of his forgiveness on their con-

sciences, and his presence was sure to doubly damnify their deeds by its outrageous mockery of religion.

The only one who claimed exemption from this reverend authority was the captain, Martin Schenck. Had nature not refused him the power of laughing, he would no doubt have laughed at the impious farces played by Fray Pedro. But tragedy was his forte ; and he left the lighter parts to be filled by the wretches under his command, he standing aloof, indifferent to the scenes they acted.

Besides the objects thus enumerated, Gaspar saw before him, in the little valley they occupied, two other individuals of a totally different character. These were two men in his own state of captivity, but bearing the evidence of infinitely worse treatment than he had suffered. One of them was old, and as venerable as grey locks and beard could make him, and he bore the badges of official respectability, in the silver chain and medal and white staff, which spoke him to be Provost Marshal of Flanders. The other, of middle age and vigorous form, was Louis Dranckaert of Liege, the assistant of the former, under the title of lieutenant. This poor fellow showed frightful marks of violence, having had both his ears recently cut off. Gaspar, stern as he could be on occasion, turned away disgusted from the pale and bleeding lieutenant, but to cast his eyes on the mangled bodies of ten or a dozen men, who bore the provost's livery, and had been all put to death by the robbers after an encounter which had just taken place ; and the troop, whose approach had led to the Moriscoe's premature arrival amidst these scenes, had been returning from completing the destruction of the small escort, backed by which the provost had had the temerity to summon the picarons to surrender.

The miserable functionary, his grey head uncovered, and his garments torn and disfigured, lay on the ground beside his maimed assistant. They were tied back to back, and presented a doleful contrast in appearance ; which afforded, however, matter of mingled merriment and abuse to the abandoned women, who danced round them, with scurrilous gestures and vile jests.

As Schenck advanced into the little valley, he spoke, from time to time, a few words of command ; and some of his officers galloped off in different directions, posting videttes,

and making dispositions that indicated a regular halt for the night. The mules were unladen, and provisions spread on the earth; some tents were pitched, and portions of provender served out for the horses. All these operations went on quite independently of the dark business about to be acted; and to prepare for which the captain had taken his station in the middle of the vale. Surrounded by the greater part of the troops, he stood there for a while, silently, and leaning on his huge rapier, his hands on the hilt, and his chin resting upon them. He had, however, given some signal, or whispered some orders to those near him, for the provost and his lieutenant were roughly raised from the earth, the cords which bound them together loosened, and they separately brought to stand opposite to Schenck. A similar signal, without any word being spoken, caused Gaspar to be dragged forward. The gloomy captain then spoke, with malignant irony of look and accent.

"Most worshipful provost marshal, hear me! In virtue of your servile function, you dared to cope with me. I have smote you, and your base crew. Are you ready to die?"

"Martin Schenck," replied the old man, "I have nought to expect from your mercy. I know my hour is come. I am ready, since it must be so; and may Heaven pardon my sins!"

"Louis Dranckaert, thou cropped lieutenant, thy persecutions against many a brave man cry out for vengeance. Prepare for death!"

"Martin Schenck, thou cruel renegade, I scorn your rihaldry, and defy you, with my last breath," said the lieutenant, in accents of despairing bitterness.

Schenck bit his lips and grinded his teeth, with suppressed rage.

"On with the work," cried he. "Let Fray Pedro do his duty."

The cords that bound the prisoners' arms were drawn still more tightly, and they writhed with pain. Large drops stood on the forehead of the old man, and rage and agony mingled together in the expression of Dranckaert's ghastly visage. They were removed to a little distance from the circle by a band of eight or ten too ready executioners; and Gaspar expected every

moment to see them struck to the ground by blade or bullet, or strung up like dogs to the branches of some overhanging tree. But a more shocking fate was meant for them, what in common phrase would be called a refinement of cruelty ; but we cannot apply that epithet in any sense to the brutality that imagined it.

Standing out a little way from the skirts of the forest which surrounded the valley at all sides were the crumbling remains of an old cork tree. It had been blasted by lightning, and had withered away by age, and all that was left was the shell of its trunk, dried up to the consistency of tinder, in which was a cavity capable of containing two men. Round this tree materials for a fire had been prepared by the odious women before mentioned ; and at the last words uttered by Schenck, a light was placed to it, and it was instantly in flames. The trunk soon caught fire, and the blaze rose all around it, leaving unharmed the dark hollow within, looking black as the purpose it was meant to serve.

The victims looked on this frightful place of death, and they saw what was intended for them. The provost cast his eyes towards heaven, and his hands opened out convulsively, but could not join together, so tightly was he pinioned. He prayed fervently, but did not attempt to move from the spot. Drancaert's visage, as he gazed on the cruel means of torture, assumed all the wildness of despair, but of that manly kind which does not shrink from, but rushes to, a struggle with fate. He clenched his hands ; stamped against the earth ; gnashed his teeth ; and loudly cursed his torturers. Some laughed at this, and mocked his rage. Others struck him, and strove to force him to silence ; but in vain. Gaspar looked on at the scene, himself pinioned like a felon, and doubtful if he were not meant to share the doom of the others. But he forgot the fear of his own probable doom, while looking on the certainty of theirs ; and he felt a thrill of horror, as he turned his eyes towards the furnace-looking tree, and the group close to it. The prisoners were forcibly placed on their knees ; the furious lieutenant held down by four powerful men, who, with handkerchiefs upon his mouth, stopped the utterance of his imprecations. The women and a large part of the men knelt around, attentively listening to the service for the dead, mumbled by Fray Pedro, who stood in the centre, close to the

prisoners. This mockery of the priesthood held a crucifix before him,

“ And in his hand his breviary he bore,
That much was worn, but therein little read,
For of devotion he had little store ; ”

and enveloped in the smoke that curled towards him from the burning tree, he might be thought a fiend of hell, reading the sentence of condemnation to the damned.

The ruffian who had the charge of the execution at length waved his sword, and caused a trumpet to sound, as the friar motioned to him that the rites were concluded. In a moment the kneeling guard arose, the women sprang up, and the doomed men were seized and hurried towards the tree. The provost, exhausted by fear or resigned by fortitude, submitted patiently, and was thrust into the cavity through the encircling flames. But the united force of as many men as could lay hands on Dranckaert was insufficient to master the gigantic strength he put forth. Bounding and struggling against all their efforts, his power seemed more than human. As they strove to tie his legs, his desperate plunges defied them. He struck several to the ground ; and tossing his head to and fro, like a baited bull, he made it a weapon fiercely effective. Several pistols and swords were held close to him ; but death by such means would have been mercy, and he courted their assault.

“ Not a shot, not a stroke ! ” cried the ruffian in command. “ In with him, in with him, alive into the flames ! ”

By this time Dranckaert had succeeded in freeing himself from the cloth which had been forced into his mouth and tied round his head. Then burst forth a torrent of execration from his foaming lips, which rose above the hoarse curses of his executioners, the screams of the female fiends, and the continued blast of the horns and trumpets.

“ Fire and flame for ever on ye, dastard villains ! Is this a death for a man ? Cowards ! slaves ! you cannot, you shall not ! Heaven shall crush ye ! hell swallow you first ! — Help, help, against these monsters ! — Is there not one man among you, to send a bullet through my brains ? Miscreants, set me free, or kill me as a soldier and a man ! And you, Martin Schenck — I see you ! cold-hearted wretch ! Look at that old man — see his grey hairs scorching — his limbs

cramped — see him suffocating, smothering, and burning ! Curse on you ! desperate and agonising death to you ! By flame or flood you shall perish !”

This fearful harangue was now attempted to be broken by the loathsome Fray Pedro, who in a fatal moment for himself advanced his squalid face close to Dranckaert's, and, with mock solemnity, warned him to be in peace with all men, on pain of eternal, instead of temporary, fire ! As if the sight of this odious thing had roused Dranckaert's expiring strength above all previous effort, he now with one bound burst the thick cords that held him, and with a sudden grasp he seized the friar by the throat in both his bony hands. While some of the robbers strove in vain to extricate their chaplain, the greater number pressed forward the group towards the flaming tree, which now began to crackle. The fire penetrated to the cavity, and deep groans from the provost told they had reached his body. But Dranckaert's fingers were close locked together, in a gripe that no force but his own will, or the stroke of death, might uncloze. He did not now speak. But as if satisfied with his revenge, he was pushed resistingly into the hollowed trunk, dragging the body of the priest close to him, and fixing his eyes on the features, convulsed by strangulation, and scorched by the flames.

At this instant a pistol shot was heard. Schenck, ever watchful, saw through an opening in the wood one of his videttes darting towards them ; and he heard the loud war-cry that he loved the least, in fast pursuit.

“ A Bassenvelt ! a Bassenvelt !” was screamed in full chorus from a hundred throats ; and a volley of carbine shots whistled through the forest.

“ Up, up, and to arms !” cried the intrepid Schenck, and the call was echoed by his men. He was in an instant in his saddle ; and, taking the command of this guard, he posted himself the foremost towards what had been the rear, but was now changed to the front of his position. His eye seemed every where at once ; and the alarm spread from front to centre of the whole body, as though it ran along an electric chain. But the band that had been charged with the murderous task of destruction on the provost and his dauntless assistant did not resign their work. There seemed still time enough for its completion ; but, happily, there was not.

Schenck and his followers expected, as usual, a charge of cavalry from Bassenvelt's hussars ; and they knew that in this narrow pass a contest, if even ending in defeat and flight on their parts, might be a long one. But on this occasion the commander of the Walloon force adopted the better plan of making his men dismount at the entrance of the forest, and they immediately appeared on foot, their pikes and rapiers glistening through the trees.

"Retreat ! retreat !" shouted the wary Schenck :—" off with the baggage mules, and let the waggons block up the road !"

As he uttered these words, and turned round to see them obeyed, a fresh volley was poured from the advancing foe, when his horse, struck by a bullet in the very brain, made one upward plunge, and then fell with his still undismounted rider to the earth.

At sight of this the picaroons fled in every direction, the murdering executioners and the women along with the rest. Only two men remained near their fallen commander, and of these one was mortally wounded, and the other dead. Their horses sprang away, and the whole band dispersed. Before Schenck could extricate himself from under his struggling charger, several of De Bassenvelt's men came up, and seeing who they had before them, they refused his demand for death, and prepared to secure him. Others, attracted by the blazing fire and the faint groans of the sufferers, ran forward and dragged them forth. Some released the Moriscoe, who ran towards the spot of the barbarous scene he had shudderingly witnessed.

The provost was fearfully burnt, and apparently at his last gasp. Dranckaert soon revived ; but when he loosened his grasp from the friar's throat, it was proved to have been indeed the grasp of death, for the miserable wretch lay strangled on the grass.

As soon as the bustle of Gaspar's feelings allowed him a moment for thought, and having ascertained that the old provost was not beyond the reach of recovery, he hurried to the place where Schenck had fallen, with a view to save him from violence, for he remembered that but for him the robber's dagger had pierced his heart. He found him on his legs and unhurt, silently and sullenly listening to the harangue of an important looking personage, who evidently was the chief in

command of the hostile troops; while the dismounted detachment, of full a hundred more, whose quick attack had so completely succeeded, advanced in regular order through the woods. A body of horsemen of still larger force came trooping forward, and dashed on at full speed along the road; the personage just mentioned gave his loud command in the Walloon jargon, made even worse than it is in itself by a thick Spanish accent—"No quarter for the outlaws!—extermination to the picaroons—no prisoner but this one!"

The person who spoke this with stentorian lungs was a tall, gaunt man, mounted on a fine horse of true Flanders breed, and, in the custom of the commanders of those days, dressed in a half suit of mail. He wore a black cuirass and helmet, but his thighs and legs had no protection beyond thick buff breeches and huge boots. His loose sleeves were of dark purple cloth, the uniform of the regiment; a blue silk scarf hung from his left shoulder, and from his right a baldrick of black leather, in which was the shining steel scabbard of the rapier that he flourished in his hand. His high-peaked saddle was almost a breast-work before, and a thickly-folded brown cloak formed a back-work behind; and there hung at either side a leathern bag for provisions for man and beast. His heels were garnished with spurs of immense length. A brace of brass-mounted petronels filled his bear-skin holsters; a long lance stood in its rest in the right side stirrup; and he thus presented the figure of a fully accoutred officer of De Bassenvelt's black Walloons.

The common soldiers differed in their costume only by the absence of the scarf, and the addition of a belt, holding a bandelier for powder and bullets for their carabines; the use of which, for cavalry, had been lately adopted in the regiment, in imitation of a change made by Prince Maurice in the equipment of the Dutch troops. Gaspar, who had a quick eye for military matters, thought as these troopers defiled along, each man leading a horse for those who did the service of foot soldiers, or fantassins, as they were called, that he had never seen, among the boasted veterans of the great Duke of Parma, such fine looking, gallant, and well appointed fellows. During the few minutes consumed in their passing by, the commander gave his instructions to the several officers under his orders for the dispersion, and, if possible, the destruction, of the marau-

ders ; and reserving but a few men with him, he renewed the harangue which he had been addressing to the captive Schenck, when Gaspar hastened to the spot.

"No, Martin Schenck, death is a boon not to be granted to a man like you. My orders were to spare you—to force life upon you ; and a hard task it was for *me*, who have given death to hundreds—to me, whose sword blade wears an everlasting blush from the slaughter this arm has done ! Know that you are now prisoner to none other than Don Diego Leonis, so called from having killed single handed three lions on the Barbary coast, lieutenant-colonel in De Bassenvelt's hussars, and one who should be, if honours were the meed of valour, a knight of the golden fleece long since. Know that——"

"Be you who you may, obey your orders—take me hence, but do not smother me with the smoke of your boastings," said Schenck, with a sternness that utterly discomfited the vapouring Spaniard. He turned himself two or three times half round in his demipique saddle, under the pretence of looking to his detachment, although they were all out of sight and in hot pursuit of the picaroons, as was told by the straggling shots sounding through the wood.

Don Diego, however, recovered his presence of speech, and rising up awfully in his broad stirrups, he looked fiercely at Schenck, and said,—

"You know the impunity with which you may wag a tongue at one who only wields a sword. You are my prisoner, and I pity your misfortune, while I brook your insolence : but were you free, Martin Schenck, by our holy Lady of Lerida, I would lift you from the earth, and toss you up so high towards heaven, that you should be dead before you touched *terra-firma* again !"

"A good rhodomontade, my brave braggart ! and, depend on't, when I *am* free, you shall have an opportunity of redeeming your boast ! Lead me away !"

"Well ordered, great commander, with nought to command ! But you must now learn to obey, instead of bullying ! Another word will draw my gauntlet towards your mouth ; and if I once place my hand upon it, the blazing breath of Vesuvius could not remove it till *yours* be stifled !"

Satisfied with this volcanic burst of eloquence, and afraid of some unceremonious retort, the Don proceeded once more to

give out his orders for the safe conduct of his prisoner, and the care-taking of the provost and his lieutenant, to whose rescue he had specially advanced. He also, with the caution of a good soldier, attended to the advices brought back to him at intervals by scouts from the party in advance; and being satisfied that the outlaws made no effectual resistance, and that the purport of his expedition was fully answered, he prepared with no small triumph to convey his several trophies to Welbasch Castle, where he stated his colonel, Count Ivon, to be waiting, "not doubtingly, for he knows his man—but anxiously, for the accomplishment of this arduous task."

As these preparations were making, and while the provost and Louis Dranckaert were carefully placed on rudely constructed litters, and Schenck securely fastened on the back of a large mule, Don Diego's eye fell upon Gaspar; and he was not slow in enquiring every particular as to his place of abode, his destination, and his sojourn with the robbers. When the Moriscoe told as much of himself as he chose to reveal, and stated that he was bound to Welbasch Castle with the intention of joining De Bassenvelt's force, the commander instantly assured him of safe conduct, and the speedy means of arrival. He pointed to one of the robbers' horses, which had fled on the discharge which killed its owner, and which had been caught and secured by a man of Don Diego's body guard.

"There," said he to Gaspar, "is the just return for the loss of your own steed, good fellow. Mount it—pursue your way, and have the glory of bearing the first news of my victory! Speak moderately of my valour, for it needs no trumpeter. Talk not of my clemency; be silent as to my magnanimity. The name of Don Diego Leonis is in itself a warrant of all. Say only you were sent by *me*, and fate itself will turn pale at the very shadow which my coming casts before it. Away! and speed you! The echo of your horse's hoofs shall herald the advance of a hero!"

Gaspar, scarcely venturing to believe the reality of this fortunate termination to his adventure, mounted his new steed, and found him at once of high mettle and tractable. He obeyed most willingly the orders of Don Diego, and departed at good speed; and recovering his composure by the time he passed the Sambre without let or difficulty, he turned his

thoughts once more to the absorbing subject of his mission, and seemed to look upon the stirring interruptions it had experienced but as visioned fancies rising on his brain.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE broad disk of the evening sun was sinking behind the forests of Hul and Marliere. The little stream that separates them was tinged by the red gleams which, reflected from a mass of fleecy clouds, spread far across the Meuse, and full upon every object on its eastern bank. The most prominent of those, in that part where the river runs its course directly northward from Dinant to Namur (and nearly midway between the villages of Rouillon and Bouvignes), was the castle of Welbasch, on a high ridge, that presents an almost perpendicular face of granite to the scorching rays which strike against it from noon to sunset.

All the way down this steep descent nature had formed stations of almost impregnable defence. Bastions and ramparts rose, in appearance, in regular lines, so as to deceive the most practised eye which viewed them, from the western side of the stream, into the belief that the art of fortification had been laboriously practised there. At the foot was the close built and gothic village, containing forty or fifty houses, and an old ruinous church, which claimed an antiquity even more remote than the castle that crowned the heights. An inscription, scarcely legible, vouched that it was built by Hugo de Warfusée (better known in the old chronicles as the rich Miller of Awys), somewhere about the year 1100. The castle was nearly fifty years younger, being commenced by Messire Libert, the grandson of Hugo, and finished by continual additions of his three sons and successors, until it became one of the most extensive, and incomparably the most important, of the fortresses that guarded that line of frontier. Passing through several generations of this ancient race, in direct descent from one of the sons of Raes de Warfusée, it finally came into the family of Bassenvelt, in the person of

Gerard, surnamed the Saracen, from a strange fancy which possessed him after his return from the Holy Land, and of which the castle itself bore evidence, up to the very time of which we now treat.

This Gerard, who had in the furor of enthiasiasm sold all his estates, with the exception of this castle and its grounds, and followed, about the year 1275, in the train of the latest fanatics that formed the eighth crusade, was made prisoner by an Egyptian chieftain, and passed several years in slavery. By some lucky but unrecorded chance he saved the life of his master, who set him free, on the condition of his never again bearing arms against the followers of the Prophet. Gerard returned safely to his native land ; and, in the fantastic spirit of the times, he approached his own castle disguised as a pilgrim, intending to himself and his chatelaine the delight of a romantic surprise. A night's lodging was accorded him, and a supper as well. During the convivial discourse of the menials at the repast, the disguised master was inspired with suspicions not favourable to his own honour or the fidelity of his spouse. He accordingly repaired, in the silent hour of midnight, when the castle was wrapped in sleep, to the well-remembered chamber of the chatelaine. She was not alone. A handsome young page supplied the place of her long-absent lord. In the excess of his rage, Gerard killed his wife on the spot, but reserved the page for a more lingering revenge. The furious chieftain made himself known, was placed in the possession of his rights, and was soon after seized with a frenzy, quite unique. He believed himself to be a Turk ; adopted the Asiatic costume ; decorated his château in the style of an eastern harem ; filled it with the daughters of his villagers, whom he forcibly seized from their fathers and lovers, and made the guilty page take the place of their guardian, with every possible security against his repeating his old offence.

In three years this madman died ; but in that period he had found means to metamorphose the exterior of his castle, in complete unison with its internal masquerade. Over the fine substratum of gothic architecture, he had placed a layer, as might be said, of that entitled saracenic. Towers and turrets, ogives and éyletholes, were all intermixed and surmounted with decorations suited to the minarets of the East ; and under the cornices and parapets were rows of turbaned heads

looking grimly down, in different burlesque expressions, as suited the pleasantry of the sculptor. So the castle remained, for centuries after the death of Count Gerard, who did not, however, extend his innovations to any of the more important characteristics of the place. It gained under his descendants continual additions to its strength, and at the epoch of our story it was (in the possession of Count Ivon, and garrisoned by his regiment of Walloons,) looked on as a place of such consequence, as to make its occupier independent, in proportion as it was deemed impregnable.*

On the skirts of the little alder grove, the outmost plants of which dipped their branches at every breath of wind into the river, stood Gaspar the Moriscoe, gazing upwards on this grotesque yet formidable fortress, and anxiously watching the rays of the setting sun, as they sloped down the opposite granite ridge, and gradually left the lower crags in shade. The Moriscoe had no keen perception of the beauties of inanimate nature, or he would have paused long, and looked with delight on the exquisite landscape around him. But his glances all turned inwards, to the contemplation of his own deep thoughts, or went abroad into a scene of fancied triumph, when he should mark Beatrice's seducer bleeding at his foot. He stood sufficiently concealed among the brushwood to avoid observation from the castle or village; and while his horse snatched a few mouthfuls of young leaves from the tree to which he was tied, Gaspar gazed with mortal ken upon the castle, while his mental vision pierced the recesses it could not enlighten.

The sun at length went down, and his disappearance from the horizon was announced by the discharge of one gun from the castle battlements, which echoed far across the river into the distant forest. A dark curl was on the stream; and the trout rose eagerly at the spring flies which already came out in swarms. The light alder twigs were ruffled; and the river

* Many of these traditional particulars have been attached to the Château de Camblin-Chatelain, near Bethune, in Artois; and there is an old provincial ballad recording the story, commencing thus:—

“ De la dame de Camblin
Qui veut ouir l'aventure ? ”

and ending,

“ Que les Turcs les plus méchans
Ne sont par les mecréans.”

trembled, as the chill north breeze came freshly up against the current. But Gaspar saw not these little accidents of beauty, which float on the bosom of creation, like the glittering insects sporting on the water's surface. He only watched for the approach of the promised boat and his mysterious guide, if indeed it were not still possible that he had left him behind, in the person of Shenck, to whom his suspicions seemed magnetically to turn.

Armed, as the Moriscoe now might call himself, with the privilege of Don Diego's message, he could calculate on safe entry into Welbasch Castle, and fair welcome to himself and his intelligence. But a repugnance to steal into the bosom he meant to stab, to follow up the words of friendship with the blow of death, rose upon Gaspar's conscience, which was not callous to generous impressions. He had rather not have been Don Diego's messenger. He wished for no more than entrance to Count Ivon's castle as a mere stranger, and admission to his presence as on a simple matter of business. He therefore resolved to wait patiently awhile, to see if his promised companion would appear, ere he presented himself as the special and confidential herald of good news which was so soon to be forgotten, in the deed he meant to perpetrate. Thus Gaspar reasoned with himself; but he, in fact, began to feel the want of support. The better part of his nature already faltered, as he pictured to himself this chieftain, in his pride of command, in his revelry of love, to be struck to the heart by his hand, and turning his last looks and thoughts towards *her*, whose existence might be severed by the stroke which was to end her bliss. *It* was guilty, to be sure — so was *she* — so was *he* — yet they were but mortals, and flesh was weak, and passion strong; and so the Moriscoe argued *with* himself, and half *for* them; when, as if to force down these thoughts of weakness, the looked-for boat came silently across the stream, rowed by a single man, whose cap and furred doublet of light blue were clearly visible before he had passed half way. A cloak which hung on his shoulders was left open at the breast, as if purposely to show this token by which the Moriscoe was to recognise him.

As soon as Gaspar saw this associate, his heart bounded, but scarcely with joy. It seemed, certainly, to fling away the doubts and misgivings that had begun to press on it; yet it

felt the removal not a relief, but rather as a stripping off of a mantle which had comfortably clothed the naked purport with which it was filled. Gaspar did not thrill with that wild energy which had before inspired him, as he stepped into the boat, leading his horse along with him, in obedience to the silent beckon of the masked person by whom it was guided. But as he trod upon the side, he almost started back again. He seemed to plant his foot on the threshold of crime; and the question flashed irresistibly on his mind, "Have I a right to kill this man?" He hesitated, and must have looked what he felt, for the boatman whispered to him, —

"Come in, come in! There is no time for hesitation now, we shall be observed and suspected."

Gaspar made a sudden spring forward, and stood fixed and statue-like in the boat. But his emotion did not stand still. He was at once convinced that his present companion was not the strange horseman. Not only was the whispering voice quite different, but the stature of this person, though he sat while he plied his oar, was evidently much taller, and in no respect but in an air of youth and activity the same. As he looked on him, a doubt of treachery once more ran through his mind. Then a feeling that his former companion had fallen into the hands of the robbers; and then those perplexing doubts of others, which are natural to a man not sure of nor satisfied with himself. But the rower pulled his boat across, with no display of suspicion that he was suspected; and in the few minutes thus occupied, the following short colloquy took place.

"Have you the token?"

"I have;" and with these words Gaspar handed over the governor's ring.

"You are the brother of Beatrice?"

"Yes."

"You are ready to revenge her?"

"I am!"

"You are sent by Don Juan de Trovaldo for that purpose?"

"Yes."

"Then falter not. The blow once struck, the dishonour of your race is revenged, you are no more a slave; and I shall have ample means of rewarding your courage, and repairing

her wrongs. Speak not a word to me. Follow my guidance; enter the castle; announce your assumed name and pretended purpose; and demand to see the captain on duty for the day. Through him ask a private interview with De Bassenvelt — and then do your duty!"

A finger slipped under the mask, and placed on the speaker's lip, was the signal for silence on both sides, and not a word more was uttered. The boat was moored just above the village. The passengers both landed; and Gaspar advanced, leading his horse close to his guide, who took a winding path outside the village skirts, that led to the first of a succession of gates visible up the hill, communicating with the fortress above. To this gate the guide pointed, then raised his clenched fist above his head, shaking it the while, in a manner to denote some impressive meaning; and immediately disappeared round one of the craggy points of rock.

Gaspar, left thus once more to himself, hurried forward without a moment's pause; and having undergone the strict examination of person and purpose to which strangers of all classes were subject, he was admitted into the precincts of the fortress; and passing along under an escort from the guard, he successively traversed the various outworks, bridges, and moats, and finally found himself within the castle walls. Thus in the very heart of his enterprise, all the boldness of his nature returned. He was no longer irresolute. The struggle between good feeling and fierce passion was over. The latter had triumphed completely; and his mind had no room for thoughts or images, but those of injury sustained and vengeance to come.

During the time occupied in the Moriscoe's movements, the evening repast of the garrison of Welbasch Castle had been merrily going forward. Count Ivon de Bassenvelt sat at the head of his table, doing its honours with all the grace of well-bred conviviality, blending the joyous tone of social life with a sufficiency of ceremonial — the medium between the boisterous manners of the country, and the unjoyous etiquette of the court. Count Ivon's whole bearing gave evidence of a close acquaintance with the best society in various countries; and a natural current of good fellowship was passed, as it were, through the gauze of refinement, but it was not *over-strained*. He was a Walloon by birth and early education; hardy, ac-

tive, and brave, as his countrymen have at all times been. But much of his life had been spent in the Spanish capital, after he had finished his education at Salamanca, with intervals of service in the armies of Philip II. in France and Italy. He was, at the time of his introduction to our readers, in his twenty-fifth year ; and he had even then obtained the reputation of being one of the most valiant soldiers and accomplished libertines of his age.

On the accession of Albert and Isabella to the sovereignty of the Low Countries, (archdukes, as they were called, without distinction of genders,) Count Ivon was chosen by Albert, under whom he had served at the sieges of Calais, Ardres, and Amiens, as one of the suite by which he was accompanied into Brabant. Ivon gladly accepted his appointment. All the feelings of home attachment were awakened. Early recollections crowded on his mind ; love of change gave a fresh impulse to his satisfaction. But a deeper sentiment than any of these made him rejoice in this new turn in his destiny. He had in him an inherent love of liberty, and a prompt sense of justice, which joined to excite his sympathy in the struggle which had so long been maintained by the Netherlands against the powerful tyranny of Spain. He marked every step of the country towards the freedom she fought for ; but he grieved to find his native province degraded again under the Spanish yoke from the position it had for some time held, as a member of "the peace of religion," by virtue of which, a community of interests and an equality of rights, a merging of sectarian opinions in the common cause, had been fixed as the basis of the national charter. Ivon felt that Brabant might be regenerated ; and he glowed with the thought that *he* might be the means.

With these views, he obtained the archduke's permission to visit his old paternal castle, and the remnant of property attached to it ; and when once there, he contemplated with delight the facilities offered by the place towards the furtherance of his design. He had the old furniture polished up, and established a hasty and imperfect household. The country was just at that period infested by such marauders as those whom we have brought before our readers. Long arrears of pay gave an excuse for the numerous desertions from the archduke's army, which ran to an alarming extent through

the Spanish and Italian veterans; and many bands were formed, made up of all that could be conceived of desperate and dangerous. To oppose these brigands, heavy taxes were levied on the people of the country; and they were often forced to contribute in person as well as purse toward the suppression of the common pest. Independent levies were raised by several of the seigneurs, to act for a limited time against them; and among others, De Bassenvelt applied for and obtained a commission to organise a regiment of six hundred men.

With military talent and tact far above the common, ardour and activity of mind and body, and the inspiring object next his heart, Count Ivon raised and equipped his regiment in an incredibly short period. In the free system of recruiting at that time practised, he found no difficulty in obtaining well disciplined veterans, discharged from or voluntarily giving up the service of the archdukes, or the neighbouring German states, where palgraves and rhinegraves retained for temporary occasions bodies of armed followers, trained for warfare and tried in its pursuit. The funds for this purpose were obtained by Count Ivon solely from his own resources. He sold to the readiest bidder (which he considered to the best advantage) all that remained of his inheritance, but the castle and its immediate appurtenances, and the village, which might be considered a part of them. He laid in a store of provisions and ammunition. He rejected offers of assistance from the states of the province, (to their great satisfaction, the want of money being at its most ruinous height,) for he would incur no obligation that might be turned to a reproach in the course which he meant to follow.

In a very few months De Bassenvelt's preparations for the avowal of his project were nearly ripe; but before they were, and ere the complete formation of his troop, he had made himself and it formidable to the freebooters, and famous throughout the provinces, by a series of deeds, the success of which gave to temerity the stamp of prudence. He soon cleared his own neighbourhood for leagues around of the cruel bands that had so long ravaged it; and the gratitude of the people of several districts raised their admiration almost to idolatry. He was already in their minds a hero; but he had, as yet, done nothing to make him appear so to his own, ex-

cept, perhaps, in *one* instance of self-denial and self-command, which was, however, of a personal and not a political nature. Added to this sketch, the acknowledgment that he was too notoriously addicted to the licentious habits of the times and of his peculiar course of life, and a tolerably correct notion may be formed of Count Ivon de Bassenvelt, as he presided at the supper-table, where we have introduced him to the reader.

The eating-hall of the castle of Welbasch differed in no wise from those common to such ancient buildings, and a hundred times described, except in its characteristic additions of eastern ornaments, and even these had in a great measure crumbled away, or been defaced by the successors of Gerard the Saracen. The black oak floor and wainscotting — the high, narrow casements, with squares of stained glass irregularly mixed with those of the common kind, which replaced each broken pane of costly manufacture — the massive mantel-piece of black marble, dug from the celebrated quarries of Namur, were all distinctive of the old buildings contiguous to that we describe; and, in the fashion of the days, helmets, banners, and battle-pieces hung round the walls, to remind the feasters of their fathers' calling and their own.

In this room were laid out every day at noon, and again at sunset, two tables. The one at the upper end was composed of covers for twenty or more; and at it sat the count, the chaplain, the officers of De Bassenvelt's regiment who were present at the castle, and not on outward duty, and such visitors as might claim the hospitality of the place. The second table was meant for the inferior members of the household above the rank of mere domestics, such as the genealogist, the librarian, the master of the horse, the chapel organist, and two or three more, with a few vacant places for such persons of the same grades as might accompany the visitors, or who might by chance come separately to the castle.

On the present occasion, Count Ivon filled his chair at the head of the board, dressed in a suit of finest purple broad cloth of Liege, richly embroidered with silver lace; his *pour-point* profusely studded with filigree buttons; a surcoat, lined with white taffeta, hanging from his shoulders; and his loose breeches, slashed with blue silk; while boots of chamois leather wrinkled down his legs, and showed his silk hose and

well-turned limbs. His dark hair, curling loosely on his shoulders, gave a softened expression to his countenance, which was attractive rather from its animated and versatile character than from the possession of any distinct line of beauty. Beside him sat a youth in a handsome suit of grey. Eight or ten officers, in the uniform of the corps, had their seats midway down, leaving several vacant at intervals; and at the foot sat another, who, unlike the rest, was fully armed and accoutred in the same style as Don Diego Leonis had appeared to Gaspar. This was the captain of the day, Count Lyderic de Roulemonde, a young man of fine appearance, the chosen friend and confidant of his colonel, who, in his tour of duty, appeared, as was the custom, thus armed and ready for immediate service.

As the evening gun was fired, this officer had left the castle to go his rounds to the battlements and outposts, to see that the different guards were on the alert, and receive their various reports. Supper had been begun ere he returned; and as he re-entered the hall he found De Bassenvelt, in his wonted manner, passing the wine-flask round, and stimulating his friends by social example, and taking every occasion to instil into them a portion of his own spirit, thus preparing them for the great purpose he had not yet avowed.

"Well, well, reverend sir," said he, turning to Father Jeromè, the chaplain and also curate of the little parish and village of Welbasch, "it may all be true for what we know; but the real witchcraft is that which inspires brave men with the love of country, and bright women with enthusiasm for the pursuits of those they love! So fill, gentlemen, another goblet of Rhein-wine to patriotism and love!"

"Yes, my son, that is very well from your mouth; but you must not stop mine, nor slur over my argument with slight and ribaldry. I repeat that a belief in magic is consistent with sound theology, in unison with Holy Writ, and proved to be just by this very book of Martin Delrio, of Antwerp, one of the most learned and pious men of these miserable and troublous days."

The good old priest having uttered these words peevishly, laid his hand on the huge Latin volume he had that morning received from Brussels, and which had led to this discussion; and he was inclined to translate again into the barbarous dia-

lect of the province several of the passages which had before provoked the laughter of his irreverent auditors. But Count Ivon had heard enough of the fanatic author of the absurd work in question, and he was resolved to stifle the garrulity of the old curate, whose after-supper topic was sure to be some abstruse theological quirk or sectarian quibble, started by the fierce disputes just then in fashion. When, therefore, the old man quoted, as from some oracle, the ravings of Francis Coster, of Mechlin, called by his admirers "the Hammerer of the Heretics," or some burst of bigotry from the Jesuits of Louvain, De Bassenvelt contrived to turn the subject into channels leading to his own purposes, but was rarely able to do so without receiving some tart reproof from the testy chaplain.

"No, Father Jerome," said he, in reply to the old man's last retort, "I lay my protest against further citations. You have read enough to confuse us all, who cannot cope with your folio. We are true believers, and admit every thing; and as we swallow all your authorities, you must not refuse to do as much by ours. Here, boy!" added he to the varlet who stood behind his chair, "another flagon of Hocheim, and place a fresh one beside Count Lyderic — I hear his spurs and rapier rattling along the passage. Come, gentlemen, and you, my good father, I pledge ye all in a bumper to friendship — and here comes its living illustration — health to you, Lyderic! we drank to you in spirit, if not by name! Why, how now, valiant captain! you look as gloomy as if an enemy were at the walls!"

Lyderic, who had entered while Count Ivon thus addressed him, (and as the testy old chaplain retired, his oracle under his arm,) advanced with a serious air to the head of the table, to deliver the written guard-reports to his colonel. He smiled, but as if smiling were a pain to him, as the latter rallied him on his grave looks, and answered, —

"Excuse me if I seem serious while on duty. When the reports are read, I shall wash down my gravity with a full horn of Rhein-wine, and return my commander's pledge with due humility for the honour he vouchsafed me."

A scowling and satirical leer accompanied this speech, as Lyderic strode to his former place, looking downwards the while, except while he threw one glance that spoke some-

thing, and that obscurely, to the youth who sat at De Bas-senvelt's side.

"All is right, it seems," said the latter, as he ran his quick eye over the reports, not paying any apparent attention to the answer he had received. "You found nothing to mention specially?"

"No—if I may not except the arrival of a stranger, whom I observed crossing the ferry above the village."

"Who passed him over?"

"A view from the southern postern could scarcely let me distinguish that," answered Lyderic, as if some offence had been conveyed in the question.

"No matter," exclaimed Count Ivon; "if his business be to us, we shall soon know his introduction. What sort of person may he be?"

"I should think him a Spanish soldier, from his plumed morion, and his horse's housings."

"Then he is likely to come from Brussels. Another message, I warrant it, from the archduke to appear at court; but they may summon me in vain! Time is too precious, at a juncture like this, to be wasted at court revelries. I record my refusal ere the invitation comes. You all bear witness, my friends, that while my distracted country needs my presence, I shall move in no direction that her interests do not point to. Fill up once more, gentlemen! and he who loves Brabant will see his liquor on a level with his goblet's brim! This round is to the regeneration of our province, for it is ours, all of us, by adoption, even if not by birth. Drink, my friends, and then *think*! Let reflection aid the digestion of your wine! We are all Walloons to-day!"

"Ay, are we, count," exclaimed a rough Saxon, the major of the corps, whose blue eye and fair hair and beard gave an air of mildness to a countenance expressing in its other parts a daring almost ferocious.

"We are Walloons in heart and mind; the bright coin you have so profusely given us has naturalised us all. This is the age for soldiers of fortune! The land that pays the best is mine. Then here's to Brabant! and may her iron mines be alchymised into gold!" and he emptied his brimming goblet at a draught.

"I cannot, with your permission, colonel, let the sentiment

of my friend and comrade here pass by without some comment," said a tall, rawboned, and red-headed Scotch captain, with a puritanical whine more unpleasantly flavouring his northern pronunciation of the Walloon French, spoken by the whole party: "such a speech might have come well from a Schwarzeiter or Lanznecht of a century back; but I hope that these mercenary notions do not apply to gentlemen who sell their swords in a just quarrel, to root out robbers, or cut off corruption. I therefore drink regeneration to Brabant! and I hope it will begin at the right end, by letting in the pure light of reformation, and ——"

"Hold there!" cried three or four Walloons and a Spaniard, rising at once, and joining their voices together. "No fling at our holy church — no Calvinistic doctrines here — we are Catholics — no image breakers!"

"Gentlemen, if you will but hear me," cried the Scot, out-voicing all the others, — "if you will but let me finish my sentence ——"

"No, no!" exclaimed they; "retract your aspersions. Count Ivon! Colonel! we call on you to preserve the compact of the regimental rule — no man is to speak of religion but Father Jerome, the chaplain; and he only in Latin, which few of us understand. The subject is forbidden. No man shall insult our pure catholic faith!"

"Who talked of your faith, or imagined there was such a thing among you?" vociferated the choleric Saxon, striking the table fiercely with his fist. "Is this the example you give of regeneration, forsooth? Do you mean to set upon this brave foreigner, and put him down? He is a Calvinist — ye are Catholics — well, what of that? I am neither one nor the other, nor do I see a tankard of Schwarz-bier of difference between you on that point. But I will stand by him against foul play."

At these words several hands were placed on hilts, and blades began to shine out. The chairs were flung aside, and every one stood up except De Bassenvelt and the youth by his side, Count Lyderic, and another officer, an Irishman, and who was called on by the contending parties several times before he stirred or spoke. But when he saw them all ranged for fight, he stood up, and drawing his sword, coolly exclaimed, in

French that was larded with even a broader brogue than that of the Scot,—

“ Now, gentlemen, that ye are really ready for work, I am at your service. I see how the matter is. You are seven against two — no great odds, if courage is at the weak side. You are seven good Catholics against two heretics. Then, in the name of the blessed Virgin, and my own Saint Patrick, here I stand in a line with the other two. My heart is Catholic, but my sword must be heretic — for the devil himself, or Luther into the bargain, should have fair play, if the quarrel was his.”

Then devoutly crossing himself, he took his place beside the Scot, and cried out, —

“ Now, colonel, for the love of Christianity, give us the word !”

Lyderic looked on with indifference at the brawl ; but De Bassenvelt, with a strong expression of dignified resentment in his air and voice, now stood up and spoke.

“ Gentlemen, officers of my regiment, comrades, is this as it ought to be ? Is this our bond of friendship together ? Is this your regard for me ? — and must I remind you of it — is this a scene to act before a woman ? Does the kersey jerkin that covers a fair form, shut out the respect due to the sex it conceals ? For shame, for shame ! put up your swords — sit down to table again ; let each man fill his neighbour’s cup, and laugh at his own wrath. Come, Beatrice, stand up and vouch to these fiery men that their swords shall soon have better tilting places than the breasts of friends and patriots. Listen, comrades — she speaks to you.”

“ Gentlemen,” said the apparent youth, rising firmly, yet gracefully, an air of chivalry thrown into a feminine demeanour, “ I thought my sex no secret to you — you have, until now, respected it. I see you are ashamed of this child’s play. I can add nothing to what your colonel has said. But be assured there is better work preparing for you than such as this. You will soon see this feeble hand wielding what weapon it can best grasp, in the cause of him who cannot afford to lose one arm of yours. Up bumpers to the brim ! and quaff to the name of the deliverer of Brabant, Ivon de Bassenvelt !”

As Beatrice spoke this, her face beamed beauty, in brightness almost too dazzling. It was more than mere woman’s

fondness that filled her eyes, as she fixed them on Count Ivon. Her inspiring air threw a contagion on those she addressed. In a moment every rapier rattled in its sheath. Every hand, so lately hostile, was clasped in friendly pressure with another; and the old helms that hung round the walls echoed with the chorus of loud shouts to the name of De Bas-senvelt.

As soon as these acclamations subsided a little, he once more spoke: —

“Enough, my friends — more than the mention of my name can merit. This has been, perhaps, abrupt — ’tis premature at least. But by and by, when our brave companions return from their expedition; when the work of our commission is announced, for I feel already it is done, and the country freed from its unlicensed spoilers, my whole design shall be told. This very night shall make ye masters of news that I hope will fill ye with rejoicing. And now let the Lethe of good fellowship close o’er the scene of this hour. It is gone for ever from your minds! Let each man place his hand on his heart. Spirits like you require no words. A warrior’s hand is a warrior’s guarantee. Enough! the bond is signed,” continued Count Ivon, as each brawny hand was laid upon its bearer’s breast. “Now we may fitly receive the stranger, even though he bear the bidding of a tyrant.”

Scarcely were the words finished, and the cheerful hum of harmony restored, when a demand for the captain of the day to see a Spanish recruit was sent in; and on Lyderic rising from the chair where he had sullenly sat during the late exciting scene, Count Ivon told him to take his place again, and ordered the enquirer to be brought directly into the full assembly.

Gaspar the Moriscoe was accordingly ushered into the room; and he stood for a minute or two near the door, with a fixed look of gloom upon his sallow face.

CHAPTER IX.

ALL eyes were immediately turned on the stranger, while Count Ivon asked him to declare his name, and the purport of his visit. He replied according to Don Juan's instructions, but not with the steady coolness he had promised to himself, for he had instantly recognised his sister, and the agitation of his high-wrought feelings could scarcely be repressed.

"Well, my brave soldier, I have done you injustice, in supposing you the herald of tyranny," said Count Ivon, in answer to Gaspar's request to be admitted into the regiment, he having produced his various certificates, and handed them to Lyderic. "We have still room for you. Our regiment is full; but in times like these a supplementary reserve of gallant fellows is good to have, and we *have* such. To-morrow you shall be enrolled. Pass me those papers, Lyderic. You will take charge of this recruit, and attach him to your troop. I see here," continued he, again addressing Gaspar, "you are stated to be a Biscayan. But your character of face would rather speak you from the south: Murcia or Andalusia produces such as yours. I have seen such in the valley of the Alpuxarras."

The careless tone of these remarks did not call for a reply, but Gaspar feared they might attract the observation of Beatrice, and draw her looks upon him. He therefore turned his eyes aside, and gazed with apparent ease, but real anxiety, on the objects around.

Count Ivon continued to examine the papers with an air of business, which is the sure accompaniment of real talent; and as his eye fixed on the feigned discharge of the supposed trooper from the Spanish service, he looked full upon Gaspar, and asked him if he had any personal knowledge of Don Juan de Trovaldo, whose name was affixed to his discharge? Gaspar, taken by surprise at this abrupt question, altogether unprepared for so public an examining, and afraid of betraying himself to Beatrice, hesitated awhile, and thus added to his confusion. He was at length about to stammer forth an answer, when De Bassenvelt exclaimed, —

“No matter — I shall press no question that may embarrass you, my friend. We shall have time enough for such enquiries as I need to make. But I know Don Juan means me a kind service; and on information not long since conveyed to me, I was led to believe that I might look for it at your hands. But sit you down at yonder table. Our worthy genealogist will do its honours, in a way fitting the habits of my ancestry, whose ways he knows almost better than he does my own. Hark-ye, Paul Cuyper, see that our recruit is made free of the castle. Lyderic, as I mean him for your troop, you will look that he has good quarters. After supper, I myself will talk with him. You have nought, my friend, to speak that needs immediate utterance?”

Gaspar, wholly thrown out of the track he had expected to follow, by the rapidity and ease of Count Ivon's half expressed accusation, could not at once reply to the simplest question. The whole scene in which he found himself tended to confuse him. He had been used to military life and soldier men; but those he had mixed with were servile agents, without thought or enthusiasm; while they whom he now looked at had an air of free and unembarrassed excitement quite new to him. Beatrice's presence, in the habiliments of manhood and by the side of her seducer, shamelessly joining in orgies unsuited to her sex, of itself caused a conflict between anger and grief; and to complete the Moriscoe's disquiet, the sight of his intended victim depressed instead of inflaming him. He had no presence of mind, as we call the faculty of prompt combinations of thought. There was a singleness and intensity of purpose within him, which (as with all men who can do but one thing at a time) disabled him from attending to auxiliary points on which the success of the main purpose depended. It was no wonder, then, if the embarrassed Moriscoe became an object of suspicion to the man he meant to murder.

Attempting, however, to recover his self-possession, Gaspar, in a faltering manner, delivered the substance of his adventure with the picaroons; and finally announced Don Diego's triumphant approach with his single prisoner.

“What! Martin Schenck at last in my power!” cried De Bassenvelt, rising from his seat with great vivacity. “This is intelligence of price! This, my friends, is, indeed, good

news ; but patience, patience awhile. No ignoble warfare against robber bands is to be yours henceforth. If Schenck be taken, the confederacy is dissolved. He was the pivot on which its whole machinery turned."

"Then," said the Saxon major, "I suppose we are now free, to starve or seek new service, count? Our term of engagement is expired: we may look for some fresh adventure, join the palatine for the promise of pay, or the archdukes for the honour of the thing; but Heaven help him who expects more gold in these beggarly days."

"Not so, major," said De Bassenvelt; "you are all destined for better things than a menial search for service such as these. Tell me, gentlemen, have ye been satisfied under my command?"

"We have, we have, all of us!" cried every voice, save Lyderic's, who sat unmoved and silent.

"Then if so, will ye be content to share my fate under that of another?"

"Willingly," cried the Saxon, "provided he pays as you did."

"Never mind payment, count. I am his man, if he's as fond of fair fighting as yourself," said the Irishman.

"Money and fighting are both good in their way," coolly observed the Scot, "and no one doubts my countrymen's appreciation of either. But for my own part, before pledging myself to any particular situation, I will beg leave, Count Ivon, to know something of the principles and motives of him I am to act under."

"The wish of our colonel is enough for us! I speak for us five Brabançons. The name of De Bassenvelt is our pledge! His word is our warrant," loudly exclaimed one of the Walloons; and the single Spaniard bowed his head in grave assent. Lyderic looked sullenly passive; and the universal suffrage seemed thus given.

"My brave and gallant friends, ye shall all be satisfied!" exclaimed De Bassenvelt. "The commander we shall be enrolled under is a hero: wisdom, worth, and valour are vouched for by his very name. In a little while you shall know it, and all that I expect from ye—that I reckon on, rather let me say. By and by our friends will be returned—their voices will join with yours, and then all will be ready for the

avowal that I long to make, and you will rejoice to hear. In the mean time let the wine flow freely. It is the life-blood of good fellowship—the very soul of society. Come, varlets; fresh flagons on the board! Bring Champagne and Auvernat. We must not let the Rhein-wein turn sour: up goblets again. Here's to our valiant lion, Don Diego, whose words, though they be but fume, ever follow the flame of his deeds. Let the culverins and falconets of Turk's-Head bastion fire a salvo to salute him as he crosses the stream. Look to it, Lyderic!"

Scarcely had these orders been given, when the sound of trumpets, followed by a running volley of fire arms, was heard from the other side of the river. Count Lyderic, as the captain on duty, had passed forward De Bassenvelt's orders; and the cannoneers sent back the sounds, as if a hundred echoes had united their reverberations to return Don Diego's report of his coming. All was in movement at these inspiring sounds; several of the party rose from table, to gaze through the twilight from the balcony that hung above the precipice and looked upon the river. Count Ivon addressed a few words to Beatrice, who replied by a smile that spoke high meaning; and he then seemed for awhile absorbed in thought. Lyderic sat still, morosely unmoved by what was passing: others plied the bottle, from the charms of which they felt no more powerful attraction. Gaspar remained fixed in bewilderment of thought, and indecision as to action.

But a short time elapsed before the creaking of bolts, bars, and chains, the clatter of horses' hoofs, and the rattling of arms and accoutrements, announced the arrival in the castle court of Don Diego and his party. He soon came stalking along the flagged corridor; and stooping low, he passed beneath the gothic archway of the entrance door, and strode two or three paces into the eating hall. The ludicrous air of bombast which had raised many a smile at this warrior was now forgotten in consideration of his important achievement; and Count Ivon interrupted the opening of a pompous oration, by rising from his seat, advancing, and cordially embracing the victorious Don.

"My brave Diego," said he, "let us spare words on this occasion; you have done a deed of greater value than your modesty would allow you to think. You have gained a title

to a much higher honour than my simple thanks. Where is your prisoner?"

"Count Ivon," exclaimed the Don, stretching up to the utmost limits of the perpendicular, "I have done my poor service in obedience to your commands. I looked on the enemy, and they dispersed as mists before the sun. I held up my finger, and their leader trembled, as a partridge that sees a falcon's talon. Had I given him but one fillip, he had fallen, like a tree struck by thunder; but I spared him, as you ordered, and I have him safe for your acceptance."

"Let me see him forthwith," said De Bassenvelt impatiently; and on the word Don Diego turned round, and gave a violent pull to a cord which was now perceived to be attached to his girdle, and trailing behind him through the door-way. Obeying the rough and degrading summons, Schenck came involuntarily forward, his arms tightly pinioned, and guarded by a soldier at each side. His head was uncovered, and his stern and unanimated countenance formed a strong contrast to the blustering glow on that of his captor. As the latter, shortening his hold, chucked the cord towards him, the fierce freebooter was dragged stumbling in, and with so ludicrous a movement that a roar of laughter burst from the officers. But Count Ivon, apparently shocked at the indignities thus offered to the prisoner, snatched the cord from Don Diego's hand, and untied the knots, exclaiming the while, with looks of reproof cast at those around him,—

"Is this treatment for a soldier of repute? Is a man like this to be used as a dog, dragged in a halter, and the mark of ridicule? No, my friends, we must respect the vanquished, and not trample on the fallen. Colonel Schenck, you will pardon me for insults I never meant, and cannot sanction."

Schenck looked at his bonds, but spoke not.

"With due submission, Count Ivon de Bassenvelt," cried Don Diego, in high dudgeon, "I must say that no disgrace nor punishment can be too marked for the cold-blooded murderer of their highnesses' provost, and him who cut the ears off the very venerable provost's lieutenant. The cord you are now unloosing is that which bound the sufferers to the stake, where they were burned alive." An exclamation of horror ran through the group, and several swords were half drawn to inflict summary justice on the perpetrator of these deeds;

when Don Diego interposed between his own denunciation and the culprit, crying out loudly, "burned alive, in part—wholly, in intention, gentlemen—but the outrage was not consummated, for *I* waved my hand, the lion shook his mane, and the flames ceased; and as I spoke the words of deliverance, the victims walked forth, with no harm but a scorched skin, and a pair of ears the less."

At this explanation of the unaccomplished crime, the hearers were disposed to absolve completely the equally guilty prisoner, such is the effect produced by exaggerated accusations; and Don Diego's burlesque extravagance turned the rising indignation aside, so that Count Ivon found in his officers ready assistants for Schenck's relief. The cords were soon cut, and the unshackled captive placed in the chair next to Count Ivon. Don Diego was seated at the other side, drinking freely of brandtwain, which he called for in preference to less potent cordials; and the remaining officers of his squadron now joined the party, having first, by De Bassenvelt's desire, seen the provost and his lieutenant safely lodged in the castle infirmary, where they were instantly attended by the household surgeon.

The table, now completely filled, presented an aspect of revelry that trenched on the boundaries of debauch. Gaspar looked on at this strange spectacle of manners to which his abstemious experience had never produced any parallel. Paul Cuyper, the jovial genealogist, who upheld the character of his province, pressed the Moriscoe to drink, with many an argument drawn from the records of generations gone by, and proverbs of which his own country furnished him plenty.

"You must learn to howl while you are with wolves, my good Biscayan, and to drink with honest fellows," cried he, slapping Gaspar on the shoulder. "Cheer up, my brave recruit: it is only snails and assassins that shrink into themselves at a shower of rain, or a flow of liquor. Why, cheer up, man; I mean no offence—clear off to the health and long life of our noble entertainer—see how *he* fills and drinks!"

The Moriscoe, thus pressed, and wincing under the genealogist's unintended severities, followed his counsel, and the example of the rest; but listened attentively, at the same time, to what was passing at the principal table, and sat with his dark eye fixed on the scene, in which he could not sympathise

nor feel himself a partaker. Preparations for a second supper were now made, in accordance with the custom of the times and the country. Hams and tongues, dried and smoked, but undressed ; salmon of the Scheldt, preserved at Amsterdam ; herrings, cured by the best recipe of the celebrated Buckelz of Bruges ; crusts of fried bread, with pepper and salt ; and various other ingenious devices to serve up (what we call) devils in disguise, were set out. Fresh glasses and fresh flagons appeared, and all made ready to renew the revelry ; those who had been so employed since the sun went down, as if he were still in the meridian, and the new comers, as though he had but just risen.

Conversation, as we may by courtesy call it, ran high. Tongues wagged, and words flowed with great facility ; but little was said worth record or remark by full eighteen twentieths of the party. In this large proportion we include Lyderic, who spoke not a word, but in reply to some question directly addressed to him ; and Beatrice, whose whole attention was fixed on Count Ivon and Schenck, who discoursed together, in a deep under tone that was uninterrupted by the boisterous conviviality around them. The inferior actors in the scene were on their parts absorbed in their own chatter, their rough pleasantries, and the main business in hand—filling the bowl and passing the flask.

One of the most actively employed in this way was Don Diego Leonis, who eat, drank, and rhodomontaded, in a style worthy to be recorded by Brantome himself, as much of it was in reality. He related his late enterprise, in all the fustian of exaggeration ; while the sharp ears of Martin Schenck caught, at the other side of the table, assertions and insinuations which he could not brook. But he did not contradict them, letting the Don undisturbedly intoxicate himself with brandtwein and vanity, and reserving to his own choice the proper time for reply or notice. Schenck himself drank deep on this occasion ; but at every goblet he emptied, he seemed to grow more circumspect. The share he had at first taken in the discourse with Count Ivon gradually decreased to monosyllabic answers, and finally to affirmative nods, or dissentient shakes of the head.

De Bassenvelt, who knew human nature well, and was not easily deceived, saw that the time was now fairly arrived for his final proposition to his followers. Accordingly he rose up,

and with an air of blended dignity and social ease, which won their attention and ensured their assent, he addressed them. Every tongue was silent the moment his voice was heard; and the full goblets were arrested, ere they reached the ever-thirsty lips that opened to receive the draught.

"My brave companions," said he, holding his full glass in his hand, "in the true spirit of ancient custom, I am about to drink to the health of a hero, and pour a libation to the finest cause that can animate the mind of man. It has been said that our Belgian ancestors thought that 'to live was to drink *;' and of a Walloon generally,—

* If truth be hid in grapes or wine,
He'll suck the secret from the vine.†

Let it be so, my friends! We have good authority for the custom. Our neighbours, the Gerans, the Swimss, the English—all lovers of liberty as of good cheer—drink deepest when affairs of state are to be settled. The seven wise men of Greece discussed the profoundest problems over cups of Falernian. And we are to-night assembled, not for a mere debauch, but for a glorious purpose that will immortalise us all. We drank, just now, to the regeneration of Brabant; we have in our own power the accomplishment of our hope. Its realisation depends on ourselves, for they who strike the first blow for liberty win half the battle. Our province has long been degraded. Instead of being an integral part of a free nation, it is a mere appendage of a distant despotism. The archdukes, in their mock sovereignty, are but the puppets of Spain, the links to bind these fine countries in perpetual servitude to that. But look to the northern states. See them independent and glorious; honoured by all the world; rich, flourishing, and happy; with no foreign foot upon their soil—while Flanders and Brabant are poor and desolated, trampled down by the heavy tread of strangers and oppressors. There are amongst you whom I address men born in other lands, of different creeds, but cast in a common mould of thought and feeling. From you I fear no invidious jealousies. Brabant is indebted to you for good service; and you will

* *Germanis vivere est bibere.*

† The original, perhaps, of Owen's epigram:—

"Si latet in vino verum, ut proverbium dicunt
Invenit verum teuto, vel invenit."

not forsake her when she calls on your arms and your hearts once more."

"No, by heavens, we will not! We are ready, lead us on!" exclaimed three or four, in different accents and idioms; and some of the foreigners, carried away by the impulse of the moment, spoke their own languages.

"Corazon del fuego! Yo vos seguiré a la muerte!" cried a Spaniard, with hands and eyes upturned.

"I'll drain the last drop o' bluid in my heart for sic a gallant!" said the Scotchman, laying his broad hand solemnly on his breast.

"Verdammt! Ich bin dir mit herz und seele, verbunden—Ich wurde durch's feur und wasser mit dir gehen!" muttered the Saxon.

"Dash away, my fine fellow! I'll stick to you through thick and thin, if there wasn't another. Whoop! Whack!" vociferated the Irishman, giving a thump on the table that made all its paraphernalia dance and ring.

"This is as I expected," exclaimed De Bassenvelt. "Now then, my friends, up all! Let every man stand firm, with a heart as full as his glass, and a head as erect as pride itself, to do honour to the name which is on my lips,—

Maurice of Nassau!"

A shout of applause followed the gulp with which this toast was swallowed. Several of the party were prepared for the mention of this name, by Count Ivon's previous observations. Some took it as they would any other that was accompanied with a bumper of wine; and a few felt but the flavour of the draught, scarcely knowing to whose health it was poured down. The purpose of Count Ivon was, however, gained. His whole corps of officers were now pledged in the cause he had espoused. He briefly proceeded to explain to them a few particulars, which it was essential they should know.

"Within these three days," said he, "I have seen the prince. He is filled with benevolence towards us, and ready to receive us under his protection and into the confederation of the free states. I have ridden hard, gentlemen, since I left ye; and three days and nights have not been idly spent. This is the crowning of all. The good luck that threw this brave officer among us, the chance that made Martin Schenck my

guest, and the readiness with which he has just now acceded to the offers I was authorised to make him, have set the seal upon our success. While he remained our enemy, or rather not decidedly our friend, no enterprise like ours could have been ventured on. We only waited to secure him. He is now allied to us by the pledge of honour,—a soldier's bond. He is now full colonel in the service of the states of Holland, the rank he held in the ungrateful armies of the tyrant. Here, gentlemen, is his commission, signed by the prince's hand—and here is mine—and yours, my friends, each and every one; so surely did I answer for your unanimous accordance in my views."

With these words he produced a leather case which had lain beside him; and taking out the different documents, he handed each officer that which transferred him into the service of the States, confirming to each the rank which he held in De Bassenvelt's regiment of Black Walloons.

Then, on a signal given by Ivon to an attendant, the latter brought forward another case. This he unlocked, and produced from it a number of chaplets, formed of white beads strung together with silver clasps. He spread a quantity of these on the table; and holding up one in his hand, he said,—

"Look on this, my friends! All will understand, though few may recognise, this badge of Walloon freedom. I need scarcely say that such was the distinctive mark, borne in the brief yet brilliant era of the junction of our province with those happier states which have not relapsed into slavery. To-night we revive it. Each one of these chaplets has been woven by fair fingers. Here is the heroine, who, devoted to our glorious cause, has thrown the charm of female sympathy around it. She shall install us each with this insignia. And the remembrance that it was twined round our necks by the hands of beauty, will not lessen its virtue in the keeping of the gallantry which consecrates our cause. Here, Beatrice; I bow to receive this sacred pledge from thee."

Beatrice, gracefully rising at the call, placed a chaplet round Count Ivon's neck, and clasped it there. She successively did the same by each of the officers, who all advanced for the purpose; and then, taking one of these simple collars of an order of which Patriotism and Valour were the founders, she attached it round her own neck, and exclaimed, —

“ I thus consecrate myself to the deliverance of Brabant, and the faithful service of its regenerator, Ivon de Bassenvelt ! I devote my services of mind and body to the cause in which he has embarked. I will follow him in the contest, in danger, even to death. I cast aside from this moment all the weakness of womanhood — and I live but for his glory and his country’s freedom ! ”

A burst of deep-felt applause followed these words. Every man pressed his hand to his breast, in signal that he adopted the vow of Beatrice as his own ; then seized on the document that ensured his rank and service ; and in the triple enthusiasm of adventure, gallantry, and wine, each firmly believed himself a hero.

CHAPTER X.

LYDERIC DE ROULEMONDE alone formed an exception to the general excitement just described. He sat, throughout the changes of this evening, as if his mind had fled to some other sphere, casting a dark shadow o’er the frame it had abandoned. His fine face was marked with traces of discontent, which had evidently worked from within. No furrow from common causes was there. He was young and vigorous, and ought to have been happy. He had qualifications enough to ensure him success and enjoyment in almost any pursuit. But he wanted that springy charm of character which grows from the confidence of inward worth, and strengthens in the pride of thinking and acting from one’s self. The fruits of his mind were not indigenous. Every word, every act, and almost every thought was imitation ; and while conscious of inferiority to those he copied, he hated the original, because it forced him to despise the counterfeit. Envy was the vulture that gnawed his heart — that contemptible passion, which leads men to magnify the qualities of others, and sinks their own even below their level ; and is followed by “ hatred, malice, and uncharitableness,” in a sequence more natural than was,

perhaps, calculated by the framers of the sublime homily in which they so succeed each other.

An envious man can never rise beyond his station, nor be happy in it. He is always measuring himself with those above him; not with the noble emulation of raising himself, but in the paltry hope of dragging them down. He has, therefore, no enjoyment in their merit. He is dazzled, not enlightened, when he looks at them, and chilled when he turns his gaze upon himself. His best feelings expire under the influence of one mean vice; and thoughts and deeds of baseness supervene, with a speed that shocks, and a force that overwhelms him.

Such a man was Lyderic de Roulemonde. Of an ancient house, he had squandered his inheritance. Like most of the young nobles of Brabant, he was educated in Spain, and entered early into the army. He met Ivon de Bassenvelt as companions in arms may meet — in the dissipations of military life, when all float alike on the surface of the world, nor dive into the depths of nature, to know their own or fathom that of others. In the careless way in which friendships of the kind are formed, De Bassenvelt formed his. He saw in Lyderic no lack of what are considered in camps as the soldier's best qualities — courage and profusion; and he entered into a close and confidential intercourse with him, the more readily, perhaps, because Lyderic thought highly of his talents and esteemed his character. For Ivon was not insensible to the pleasure of exciting approbation, nor ungrateful for its expression. He did justice to his new friend's accomplishments, even on points where he felt them to be superior to his own. In short, his friendship was the free and cordial sentiment of a noble nature, seeing and putting forth the merits of its object, and feeling itself illuminated, not eclipsed, by their display.

The feelings of Lyderic were the direct contrary to this. As soon as his friend's advantages shone forth, he felt as though his own became extinct. He had no sympathy with another's success. The praises of Ivon became discord to his ears. The admiration excited by his valour, his enterprise, and his taste, appeared overstrained or misplaced. Lyderic was ashamed of this turn of feeling, yet he would not confess and shake it off; but, like the Spartan youth who held the

stolen reptile beneath his cloak, the closer he concealed the passion the fiercer it gnawed, till his heart was eaten to the core.

Ivon, unconscious of this altered state of feeling, knew not how to account for the bursts of moroseness occasionally escaping from Lyderic. Judging by himself, he thought, that had any abatement of his friend's regard taken place, he would have honestly displayed it, and broken off their intercourse. But seeing the usual semblance of attachment, he attributed to some passing caprice an occasional change that excited his pity rather than his resentment. Hoping to alleviate, he fed the evil, in heaping kindness upon him whom he still thought his friend. For while a generous mind rejoices in receiving almost as much as in conferring a benefit, a mean one writhes under obligation; and even in granting it, is only pleased by the belief that it inflicts a degradation.

All that thus rankled in Lyderic's mind was of slow development. He continued long in seeming what he ought to have been in fact. He was, by Ivon's interest, appointed to the train of the archdukes; and he was the first named officer in his regiment. Only two others had superior rank to him, the Saxon major, a hardy veteran, and Don Diego Leonis, his senior in years and standing, chosen to the station of lieutenant-colonel by De Bassenvelt, who knew that a boaster is not (as is commonly thought) of necessity a coward; and who had seen enough of the Don to be certain that he was valiant, faithful, and discreet.

Lyderic did his duty in his new post as a task, not as a pleasure. Still Ivon unsuspectingly intrusted to him even the secret intentions which were only publicly avowed the night we have described. And he admitted him to a *share* in another project, which had for some time previously occupied him not a little — the carrying off Beatrice from the convent at Bruges. They had frequently been reciprocal confidants of each other's adventures of gallantry. An avoidance of a friend's pursuits in that way was high among the points of chivalry then existing. A violation of that trust was looked on as the deadliest breach of faith. Confidences of the kind were therefore more frequently given than in later days; when the true point of honour became better understood, and refinement having broken down the barriers raised by chivalry,

men learned to trust in no one when interest or passion might tempt to treachery.

The moment that Lyderic saw Beatrice, on her arrival at the castle of Welbasch under Ivon's triumphant care, a passion apparently deep as it was violent took possession of him. In a few days, it seemed wholly to absorb him. She appeared imbued with a spirit of female heroism, which in those times exerted such powerful sway ; and the male attire which she constantly preserved threw a barrier, as it were, before her charms, without communicating any notion of indelicacy, which, in our days, would have weakened their effect. She at once delighted and awed Lyderic ; and he suffered tortures, in witnessing the tone of cordial freedom with which De Bassenvelt preserved, as he had gained, her heart.

Inflamed by this passion, which had its foundation, perhaps, as much in envious jealousy of Ivon's success as in a sudden desire for its object, Lyderic was hurried on by these mixed emotions, with an impetuosity the greater in proportion to his long constraint. He at once resolved on the possession of Beatrice, and the destruction of the man she loved ; and seizing the advantage of Ivon's last absence for a final conference with Prince Maurice, he despatched an anonymous communication to Trovaldo, informing him of the place of Beatrice's retreat, and into whose hands she had fallen. He assured him of a ready co-operation in the castle, should he send forward to the rendezvous appointed the brother of Beatrice (with such token of his identity as Gaspar was provided with), to revenge her seduction and his own dishonour. He, however, carefully guarded against any expression that might betray him to be the author of this treachery ; and in meeting the Moriscoe, and facilitating his entrance into the castle, he preserved his cautious concealment, as has been seen.

When Ivon had given orders for Schenck's accommodation, as befitted his present rank, he proposed a parting goblet to the sound slumber of all, and the fair rising of the morrow's independence. After this pledge being cordially passed round, with much wine spilt on the board, and not a few glasses broken in the operation of clinking them together, (as the type of an amity as brittle, perhaps, as they,) Beatrice set the example of retiring. She took her leave with much gracefulness, being waited on at the door by a female attend-

ant, a somewhat incongruous association with her attire, and the readiness with which she adopted the ways as well as the dress of men.

No sooner had she disappeared, than Schenck, to whom De Bassenvelt had previously made known her sex, addressed his host as follows :—

“ Count Ivon de Bassenvelt, the absence of that lady allows me to speak on a subject which nothing but the presence of a female could have hitherto restrained. We are here now as equals, colonels in the same service, fellow-soldiers, and bound for life and death in the same cause. I hold in my hand the commission which you have been authorised to offer me. In accepting it I feel that every reproach is washed away, which might have attached to a reputation not entirely obscure, from my late association with men, driven by the baseness of those who rewarded my services with neglect to throw themselves on the world and their good weapons for support. The motives which led me to join such men are for my own conscience. For my acts, while at their head, this document absolves me, for I own no authority in these realms but the free states of Holland, and that of the provinces we are now joined together to liberate from the yoke of Spain. But—and I here address ye all, my brother soldiers—one stain has been rudely flung upon my personal feelings, and by myself alone can that be expunged. One man has dared to beard me, and degraded himself by an attempt to debase me while in his power, but, even there, his superior beyond the span of measurement. I cannot condescend to specify the outrage, which was witnessed by ye all.

“ Count Ivon de Bassenvelt, never has mortal man heard Martin Schenck make so long a speech as this. Words signify little. Deeds only speak. I demand the rights of chivalry. I throw myself on your hospitality. I disclaim all slight to you or your regiment. But I single out the miscreant thus, and thus I dare him to instant and mortal combat.”

With these words he dashed his heavy glove across the table, and full in the face of Don Diego Leonis. This rather unknighly mode of flinging down his gage took the Don by absolute surprise. The force of the appeal, aiding the influence of the copious draughts he had been pouring down his

throat, made him stagger from his equilibrium. A murmur ran round the table. The insult was shocking — no accommodation — no delay could be thought of — blood must flow. Schenck called on De Bassenvelt for a sword. Don Diego, recovering his balance and recalling his senses, had his weapon already out of its sheath. Before Ivon could interpose his authority or advice, Lieutenant Gallagher, the young Irishman before spoken of, had drawn his rapier, and placed it in Schenck's asking hand, which grasped it with a force and wielded it with a management that belied the evidence of the large potations he had swallowed. The wine seemed to have produced on him only the effect of steadying his arm, clearing his head, and brightening his eye. The latter was fixed on his opponent with deadly lustre, as though it would have killed him at a glance.

In a moment the length of the table was passed at either side by the furious pair, and they took their stand in the open space between that and the second board, at which still sat, in awful observance, Gaspar and the rest of the party with whom he had been at first placed, and by De Bassenvelt's orders retained in the hall. Lyderic and the other officers formed a ring round the combatants; and Count Ivon himself, finding that interference would be vain, stood forward in the circle, to see that all should be as fair as the inequality of the men's intellects permitted.

The long rapiers soon clashed, and at every pass made and parried, the blades sounded like a subtle breeze rushing through some crevice in a broken pane of glass. The lights from the lamps suspended from the ceiling, or those brought from all quarters of the chamber and placed upon the floor, showed plainly to each combatant the person of his foe; and the different rays, falling obliquely across each fierce visage, allowed the desperate expression of each to be fully displayed.

Longer after longer was made at either side. Schenck stood firm and rigid on one spot. Don Diego attacked, advanced, and sprang back again, with a skill and vigour that proved the effects of wine to have yielded to the deadly passion aroused in his breast. No wound was observed to be received, yet blood soon trickled on the floor, just between each, and where their arms were crossed in the heat of the as-

sault, so that it was impossible to ascertain from which it flowed.

"Hold, gentlemen! Enough!" cried Ivon. "Blood has been drawn—the quarrel is decided—part them—part them."

On hearing these words, Don Diego threw his sword wide from his guard, and paused; but Schenck, seeing the press forward made by Ivon and the rest to separate him from his prey, and marking the Don's unwary movement, he uttered a hoarse yell, and cried out, —

"Who durst step between me and my revenge? Again, miscreant, at you!"

And with a skilful turn of his arm he crossed Don Diego's blade, and struck it from his hand. He then bounded on him, grappled him, with his left hand, by the throat, shortening his sword the while; and, after a brief struggle, he flung the Spaniard to the floor, and fell upon him designedly with his whole weight.

"Now, caitiff, beg your life, or die!" said he, sternly, raising his sword-arm with a few deadly inches of the steel—but enough by practised measurement—pointed to Don Diego's breast.

"Diego Leonis beg his life from a base-born hound like thee!" exclaimed the gallant Don, struggling with every nerve—"from thee, thou burner of grey-bearded men! thou butcherly cutter off of ears!"

"To thy heart, then!" cried Schenck, jerking back his arm a span, to add force to the final blow; when it was instantly arrested from behind, and the weapon suddenly drawn through his hand, with the infliction of a severe wound, by another which grasped the hilt. Schenck, starting up, in the double influence of pain and rage, looked round, and saw the figure of a young and lovely female close to him, her hair flowing disordered, his sword in her hand, and Count Ivon, with looks of pleased surprise, holding her in his arms. It was Beatrice, who had, after leaving the hall, but just loosed her hair, thrown off the doublet and cloak, from whose imprisonment she had panted to get free, and flung her dressing-robe around her, when she heard the clashing of swords, and hurried to the spot, where, unmindful of the chivalrous etiquette or feminine decorum which might command a dignified

non-interference in an act of murder, she interposed, to balk the bloody aim of one, and to save the life of another — she knew not and asked not whom.

Don Diego, released from the grasp of his merciless foe, raised his huge length, and was soon helped upon his legs by his surrounding friends. Although wounded in the arm, he attempted to renew the fight; but he and Shenck were separately encompassed by the spectators, and each hurried away in different directions.

De Bassenvelt, folding one arm round Beatrice, tenderly and respectfully supported her from this scene of her first contact with weapons and bloodshed. Having seen her safe in her apartments with her handmaid Trinette, a simple girl from the village below, who, more timid than her mistress, had nearly fainted at the clash of swords and the tumult of loud sounds, De Bassenvelt returned to the hall. Schenck and Don Diego were by this time removed; almost all the officers had retired; and the persons composing the second table had broken up into two or three groups at the lower end of the apartment. Gaspar alone still sat in his place, with a fixed stare that seemed to embody vacancy, or people it with objects of his own fancy.

“Lyderic, come hither,” said De Bassenvelt, taking him under the arm, and leading him to the distant part of the hall — “I have much to say to you in a brief space. What think you of our recruit, yonder? Is he no more than what he seems?”

“Why put these questions to me, De Bassenvelt? Am I the expounder of every riddle that takes a mortal shape?”

“Nay, be not angry, nor let this peevish mood of yours take head to-night. It is enough to know I have good cause to guard against this man; I shall therefore take him wholly under my own care. I will by and by lead him to my private chamber, and sift him and his character thoroughly. If I do not err, I may succeed in making him no mean agent in my plans. And now, Lyderic, for yourself a word or two. A matter of equal import to the common cause, and of infinitely more for my own individual sake, leads me to urge your immediate departure for Bruges. You are aware of the vast import of that place to the views of the confederate states. Agents and emissaries from Prince Maurice have already

sounded the burghers ; but much remains to be done. The place is divided into mean factions, which counteract, from mere local jealousies, the general interests of all : but a great step has been gained in the choice of the new burgomasters. The chief and leading one is the well known Van Rozenhoed, the goldbeater, the richest and the honestest man in Bruges, or, perhaps, in Flanders. He is an open advocate of liberty, and a warm partisan of the free states. His only daughter, Beatrice's convent friend, of whom I have so much discoursed with you, is now at home with her father. Four days hence he gives his grand installation feast ; when suitors beyond counting, and from various quarters, are formally to put in their claims for the hand of this rich and beautiful heiress.

“ And now for the great point. Start not, my friend ! — I mean to place *my* name on the wooing list, and ask this paragon to wife ! ”

“ You, De Bassenvelt ! renounce your libertine career, and, on the eve of an attempt in which life may not be worth the purchase of an hour, dream of an encumbrance such as this ! ”

“ Even so, Lyderic. Mighty motives urge the step. Wealth I must have. You know I have cast all on the hazard of this die. Save the bare walls of this castle, I have nought but what is embarked in the cause. I hope for success ; and to hope for has been hitherto to have with me. But the tide may turn, and this Maid of Bruges must be my harbour of safety if all else be wrecked. But, hark ye, Lyderic, one other feeling exists — burns in — consumes me : — I *love* her ! Canst thou not imagine such an impulse as that ? In short, she must be mine.”

“ What ! have you seen her, then ? How, when, and where ? ”

“ No matter. I *have* seen her — and more, and to my cost, perhaps, I know that she abhors me, without knowing whom she abhors ; and when she hears my name, its sound will shock her very heart. I have outraged her delicacy, but I will heal the wound ; and *you* must tell her so. You must woo her for me, Lyderic. I durst not present myself to her, even if I could ; for even now my carrying off the novice, and robbing the church of its prey, must be bruited through Bruges with loathing and execration.”

"How could the truth have come to light?" asked Lyderic, looking askance.

"I care not how, nor mean to enquire," said Ivon, in his usual reckless way. "I am now abroad; the hunters have found my lair; but I at once brave and despise them all, they who have sought, or him who has betrayed me. Beatrice's being here was known to many. It had been better, perhaps, had I confided the fact to you, my trusty friend. But now," continued he, without giving his companion time to show embarrassment which conscience might have caused, "now to the main point. You will accept my mission? Wooing in *my* place, Lyderic, will sit easy on you, eh?"

Lyderic did not wish to encounter the scrutinising glance of an eye that he knew pierced deeply when it would. He replied, still looking downwards, that he was willing to undertake the task, but scarcely thought he could appear publicly in Bruges, as the news of their revolt must soon spread far and near.

"'Tis to obviate that objection that I must urge your instant departure," replied Ivon. "That may well bear the appearance of dissent and flight from our rebel proceedings. At the court of the archdukes, it will be a passport to high favour, and if you manage well, your best introduction to the governor of Bruges. Under this safe protection you may forward my object with the burgomaster's daughter; and for my sake I am sure you will not shrink from a little *apparent* treachery, Lyderic?"

The person thus appealed to felt conscience smite him hard, and he began to fear that Beatrice might have aroused Count Ivon's jealousy. He became therefore as anxious as Ivon was to hurry his departure from the castle. He thought it would be well to be absent during the perpetration of Gaspar's tragedy. He liked the plan, so clearly traced for him, of making good terms with the archdukes; he reckoned on having a fair field opened for his designs on Beatrice, as soon as De Bassenvelt should be despatched; and he was suddenly and powerfully struck with the occasion that offered of preferring his own suit to the so much sought for heiress of Bruges, his treachery, envy, and cupidity being all roused into action by Ivon's words and views. He therefore gave an immediate assent to the pressing solicitations of the latter for his

instant departure, under the promise of receiving a letter from him, with full details as to his proceedings on arriving at Bruges.

Count Ivon then gave orders to an attendant to conduct the recruit into the antechamber of his private apartment, intimating to Gaspar that he would soon join him. Lyderic saw the Moriscoe follow the guide from the hall ; and as the door closed on him, while Ivon pressed his new ambassador's hand, and wished him a safe journey, the latter felt a shudder that crept though every nerve. It was the last struggle of good feeling, crushed beneath the tread of crime.

"Be it so !" murmured he, as he paced the long corridor leading to his own apartment. "He facilitates his fate. It is his doom, and who may cope with destiny ! Be it so !" and he hurried into the concealment of his chamber, as one who fires the train of a mine, and runs into shelter from the coming explosion. After a short interval of hurried preparation, he hastened from the castle, mounted his horse, which his varlet had quickly prepared ; and then passing through the outposts of the fortress, he crossed the river, in the boat in which he had, a few hours before, ferried over the Moriscoe. He took the road on the left bank leading to Namur, avoiding the scene of the late dispersion of the picaroons, where some remnant stragglers of the band might be abroad. As he fled, he at times involuntarily turned round and listened, and again galloped fiercely on and endeavoured to stop his ears lest sounds of murder and wailing might be borne on the wind that seemed to pursue him.

Gaspar, the Moriscoe, stood in Count Ivon's antechamber, his hand firmly clenching his dagger's hilt. The scenes of the evening, which he had witnessed with such various emotions, were still confusedly flitting before him. He was yet agitated by all that had so deeply affected him. De Bassenvelt's gallant and chivalric demeanour, his high sentiments, so energetically expressed, and the surprising power he seemed to wield so lightly over the minds of all in contact with him, filled Gaspar with involuntary admiration for the man. Yet the too evident station which Beatrice held as his avowed mistress, had at times awakened his slumbering frenzy ; and he was almost on the point of executing his desperate intention, as he saw him, so familiarly, yet so affectionately, lead her

from the hall, when she was nearly exhausted by the effort that saved Don Diego's life. From that moment the Moriscoe's feelings had not subsided ; and when the summons to repair to De Bassenvelt's room, and wait his coming, broke the reverie in which he had sat, it seemed to him that destiny had sounded the death-doom of his victim. He started up, and mechanically followed his conductor.

When the door of the anteroom was closed on him, he stood, as we have described him, transfixed in one spot. He heard voices in the chamber beyond ; and he soon distinguished that of his sister, in converse with another. Imagination swiftly pictured Beatrice, in the act of undressing, and preparing, in all her feminine charms, to press the dishonouring bed of her seducer. The Moriscoe trembled in every joint — yet his teeth were firmly set, and a fierce tension contracted his brow. He stood prepared.

At length he heard footsteps coming along the gallery. He stepped forward one or two paces, and raised his hand. The door opened ; and the lamp that dimly lighted the anteroom gleamed on the cloak-wrapped figure of the strange horseman, the companion of his journey. He knew him at once, by his hat, his mantle, and the whole air of his figure.

" Now, Gaspar," said the man, in his hoarse whisper, and walking close up to the Moriscoe, whose dagger shone in his half-raised hand — " I am as good as my word. Be firm and steady. You remember your oath ? "

Gaspar could not answer. Nervousness of feeling, and astonishment at this apparition of the avowed accomplice who had so long been lost to him, deprived him of all power of utterance.

" Come on — keep close to me ! " continued the mysterious stranger, preserving completely his self-command, with as much ease as when they trotted together along the causeway, or through the windings of the *Sonien Bosch*. He took Gaspar firmly by the right arm, and led him directly to the opposite folding doors, which with a bold movement he flung wide open. Gaspar started back, as if the gates of an unknown world had suddenly expanded before him. Instead of the bedroom which he had pictured to himself, with all its parade of wanton voluptuousness, he looked into a plainly decorated saloon, where chastity might sit enthroned ; and as if to embody the idea, the vow-breaking novice, the unblushing partner of

De Bassenvelt's revelry, Beatrice, herself, occupied an oaken chair in the centre of the room, dressed in a simple robe of white, a wreath of orange flowers twined through her jetty locks; and the maiden cestus, common to the damsels of the Moriscoe race, clasped by a brooch of virgin gold round her waist. She rose to meet her brother, with a look beaming brightness and enthusiasm.

"Stand off, in thy burlesque trappings of virtue!" cried Gaspar, shrinking back at her approach. "Where is he, thy paramour—the instigator of this loathsome mockery—where is De Bassenvelt?"

"Here!" said the stranger, unclasping his mantle, and flinging it and his hat aside; and Count Ivon stood boldly up, with open arms, before his intended murderer.

"Shades of my fathers, guide me!" cried the Moriscoe, again raising his dagger—"can guilt assume this aspect—can infamy wear looks like these?"

"Let thy heart answer thee!" exclaimed Beatrice, rushing into his embrace. "Seek not the subtilties of moral distinctions, but hearken to the voice of nature and affection. *Could* infamy wear looks like these?"

Gaspar gazed for a moment firmly on her, as he held her in his outstretched arm; then, overpowered by the tide of his emotions, he clasped her closely to his bosom; and, for the first time in his existence, he burst into tears.

CHAPTER XI.

IT was for the sixth day after Theresa's establishment in Rozenhoed House, that her father's grand installation feast was fixed, as had been justly calculated and explained by Count Ivon, in his parting conversation with Lyderic. The repast given on this occasion was, as was the custom, at the expense of the city, and took place in the banqueting rooms of the town house. Nothing could exceed the sumptuousness of the entertainment. There was a profusion of every thing in season and in fashion; and dishes were filled with delicacies as

foreign to our present tastes, as the crane of the ancients, or the peacock of the chivalric ages were to those of the gluttonous burghers of the time we treat of.

A Flemish feast has at all times borne the same character for gormandising which we attribute to the corporation diners of our own country. There is perhaps a little exaggeration in both cases, but it is more likely in the latter than in the former. Our more social habits allow to individuals the constant opportunity of convivial meetings, the infrequency of which in the Netherlands gives them, when they do occur, the greater probability of excess. It is, at all events, certain that the company, which set down at noon on the 25th of April, 1600, to the civic dinner in the banqueting hall of Bruges, did not rise from table till six o'clock in the evening, the interval being passed in the sole occupation of eating and drinking. There was no general discussion of affairs; no political harangues, digressions from the main business of the board, which give such interest and dignity to our public diners. If the attention of the feasters was now and then called off from the flavour of the viands or the wine, it was in broken and furtive whisperings. Here and there two or three persons of the same opinions sat by chance together, and indulged in muttered hints as to what was passing in the town and the country at large. But factions were so various and so fierce, that most of the guests, as they wielded their forks or raised their glasses, were likely to elbow a false friend, or an avowed enemy.

At the head of the principal table sat the new chief burgomaster, Siger Van Rozenhoed. The post of honour on his right hand was occupied by Don Juan de Trovaldo, governor of the town; on his left was the late chief magistrate, an insignificant character, wholly devoted to the Spanish interest. The second burgomaster, Van Rozenhoed's colleague, presided at a second table; and the various grades of citizens occupied the other seats in due order of precedence — echevins, syndics, hoofmans, masters of trades, greffiers, and other functionaries. Mixed with them were some of the superior officers of the garrison, and several strangers, who were in the place on matters of public duty, or on special purposes of their own.

Among the latter, one was remarkable for his handsome person, and splendid attire. He took his seat at the board, with an air of supercilious haughtiness that savoured too much

of Spanish breeding to be palatable to the taste of the Flemish burghers; and he received a stare, as proud as his own was contemptuous, from the young man beside him, one of the conservators of the feast, as was shown by the bunch of red ribands that adorned his breast, in common with those of his eleven associates. The man at the other side of the haughty stranger was a master of one of the trades, a sober old citizen, who had neither eyes nor ears for his neighbour's finery, but who gave his uninterrupted attention to the business of the table.

The stranger, who was no other than Lyderic de Roulemonde, went through the ceremonials of the day with a reserved insolence of demeanour, little like the air of genuine high born pride. He took good care to display his splendid gear and his sparkling brilliants to the notice of the company; and looked as if his eating and drinking was rather complimentary to them than comfortable to himself. He seemed quite isolated in the crowd. He had brought that morning a strong recommendation to the governor, direct from the court of the archdukes; but when he announced himself to Don Juan (carefully suppressing the fact of his being his secret correspondent from Welbasch Castle) as one of the suitors of Theresa Van Rozenhoed, he met with a reception such as he had not reckoned on.

"Señor," said the governor, with the overbearing air of official power, "I am bound to receive you with honour, in virtue of my station, and your credentials. But as an individual, I frankly tell you, you have my cordial hatred, in common with all aspirants to the hand of the Heiress of Bruges, for which I myself am a claimant, in despite and defiance of all others."

"I admire your frankness, most excellent sir," replied Lyderic, in a tone which implied that he despised it, "and I shall avail myself of it by knowing an enemy, and keeping on my guard."

"As you please, señor. I am ready, at any time, and in all ways, to maintain my right, which neither daring nor caution shall thwart. The maiden is mine, by her father's promise. How came you to start a presumption to her hand?"

"I am not here, governor, to be catechised. If I am well informed, the field, like the lists in a *pas d'armes*, is open to all comers. No contract has been signed, no pledge ex-

changed. I may have a title as good as another's ; and, even in opposal to your excellency, may indulge a hope."

A self-satisfied glance at his person in the governor's high mirror, and a look of disdain upon the gaunt and murky rival who stood beside him, accompanied this speech. The choleric Spaniard would have retorted, but Lyderic declined the wordy contest ; and, with short leave-taking, he closed the interview, and repaired to one of the hostels in the principal square, where he had taken apartments for himself and his varlet. There he found, to his infinite surprise, the promised letter from his late colonel, and quondam friend, De Bassenvelt. How it came to the inn he could not ascertain. He discovered it lying on the table in his chamber ; but to all enquiries, as to the bearer or the hour of its arrival, he met no satisfactory reply. The house, like all others of public entertainment in the town, was crowded in every corner ; and in the continual passing and re-passing through the kitchen, corridors, and chambers, ill secured and loosely watched, nothing was easier than the insertion of a billet, or the translation of an object of greater bulk or consequence. It was clear, however, that nothing was taken in exchange for the epistle which now met Lyderic's eyes. Every thing was as naturally displaced and confused as was usual with the careless varlet, who attended to his own pleasures rather than his master's wardrobe.

Lyderic turned the letter over and over in his hands, in search of some token that might discover its conductor, but in vain. He opened it at length, and read as follows, in the handwriting of Count Ivon, and in the French language, in which the general correspondence and intercourse of the highest society in Flanders as well as Brabant was at all times carried on : —

" That I still live, Lyderic, these lines are my warrant. That I owe you nought for that blessing, I am well assured. The Moriscoe has told me all he knew of his own mission. Beatrice has explained your designs on her. In one word, I know you ; and even when you parted hence, I thought I could read the depths of your heart. I have no reproaches for you. I thank you rather for the lesson you have taught me — but beware ! You are now, even when you get this, my

intrusted messenger. My hopes and my heart are all engaged in the success of your suit. Plead for me well. Your recommendation will be backed from a higher quarter than you dream of. And mark me ! I have friends in Bruges, powerful and watchful. The way in which this will reach you, will tell you their prudence and their easy access to you. Take warning ; and by honest zeal *now*, repair your late strange treachery. It is not for me alone you act. Your life is periled on the event. Play me false, and you die."

Nothing could be less calculated to put Lyderic in a pleasant mood than his interview with the governor thus followed up. It was not that he did not feel a certain relief in the assurance that Ivon had not fallen a victim to his treachery. His mind was mean, but not yet ferocious ; and although he felt enough of hate, he had no real spring of revenge to overflow his feelings towards his former friend and benefactor. But then Beatrice's avowal of his treachery towards him ; the Moriscoe's failure of nerve or purpose ; and, finally, the fact that he was himself now watched and hovered over (perhaps by that self-same wily agent) in the servile task of doing another's bidding, and even betraying that, formed a host of agitating causes, all of them sinking him deeper and deeper in his own esteem. His appetite for the burgomaster's dinner may well be supposed to have been slight ; and he repaired to the feast, in just such a mood as was sure to make him as repulsive to others as he was unsatisfied with himself.

Having for a considerable time looked on the scene, in the spirit and manner already described, he began to feel the necessity of obtaining information as to the best means of approaching, in his wooing capacity, the private residence of Van Rozenhoed, where a splendid ball was to be given that night, and where Theresa was to be introduced into life, and receive the homage of her suitors, in a way as formidable to her as it was meant to be imposing in the eyes of the world.

Lyderic, on arriving in Bruges the preceding day, had transmitted to the burgomaster the letter of public introduction which he obtained at Brussels through the influence of Don Zeronimo Zaputa, the home minister of the archdukes, with whom he had been in more particular communication

relative to the defection of De Bassenvelt from the royal cause. From this wily Spaniard he met a warm reception and a ready accession to all his particular views. But he could do nothing to forward them directly, beyond such an official recommendation as would secure him an honourable reception from Van Rozenhoed. The well-known patriotism of the latter was proof against any insidious influence from the source of government and power. So, once introduced, Lyderic was left to work his own way. His letter of credence was duly acknowledged by immediate invitations to the dinner and the ball, the first of which he was now acting on, while he began to prepare for the second. With this view, he at length turned to his neighbour at the dinner-table, and assuming a courtly and gracious manner, he addressed him, —

“ If, sir, as a stranger, and unhonoured by a formal presentation, I may venture the liberty of speech with you, I would ask at what hour the guests are likely to assemble this evening at the mansion of the worthy burgomaster ? ”

The young burgher, taken somewhat by surprise at the condescending humility of this speech, and not a little gratified after all, in spite of his pride, to be spoken to in that way by a person of such evident quality, replied, —

“ The name of a stranger, sir, is quite enough to ensure you my attention, or that of any citizen of the place. The fête at Rozenhoed House begins at seven o'clock ; I presume, sir, you are among the invited ? ”

“ I am,” returned Lyderic ; “ but being quite alone here and unknown, save by my public recommendations, I own myself at a loss as to the points of etiquette observable in your good towns of Flanders.”

“ A cavalier of your bearing, sir,” said the young citizen, “ could surely find himself at no loss in any society ; and such an appearance as yours is a fair passport any where ? ”

“ Manners, my worthy sir, may be of general adaptation, as your politeness seems to imply. But forms may differ ; and he who may not find himself at fault in the presence-chamber of a palace, might be puzzled as to the punctilio of a burgomaster's anteroom. In short, sir, as you seem by your badge to be official here, I take it for granted you are to be of the guests at Mynheer Van Rozenhoed's fête ; and if you will extend the courtesy of speech into action, so far as to be my

personal introducer on the occasion, I shall acknowledge myself your debtor, and, I trust, do no dishonour to your notice."

The supercilious tint that coloured this address did not efface the dazzling effect on the mind of the young citizen, in the prospect held out to his own consequence, by the patronage solicited of him from so superfine a subject; and he willingly acceded to Lyderic's flattering application.

"But then," continued Lyderic, in addition to some passing remarks given and received, as to the ceremonial of the occasion, "it is of no small moment to be presented to the heiress herself at a good opportunity. So many suitors are to be introduced, that one runs a risk of being confounded in the crowd;" and a glance of consciousness stole over his own person and its attire. "How many proposals are reckoned on as likely to assail the maiden fair?"

"Alas! sir," said the young burgher, deeply sighing, "I care not to enter on the fearful enumeration. I know of but one, all hopeless as it may be, which it behoves me to calculate on — my own!"

"What! are you too on the list? Why, every man I meet to-day is bent on this adventure. If it were but to avoid the servile herd, one would do well to stand aloof. I crave your pardon, sir, for this blunt speech; and you will grant it, I am sure, when I honestly avow that I myself am here on a wooing embassy to this heiress."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the young man, listlessly setting down the glass which he had mechanically emptied.

"Your air does not smack of jealousy," observed Lyderic. "The same avowal this morning to his puissant donship the governor had nearly gained me a quarrel."

"Let those be jealous who have hope! — for me 't is all the same, no rival, or a dozen. The beautiful, the gifted Theresa, could never condescend to be mine!"

"Why then persist in the design of wooing her?"

"Even as a blind man turns towards the sun, basking in the beams whose brightness is not for him. I will prefer my presumptuous suit. She shall at least know I glory in the very pride of loving her; and I am sure of her pity for my hapless passion."

The author of this speech, which made him thoroughly

contemptible in the eyes of the more aspiring Lyderic, was interrupted by loud calls from various quarters of the table, for supplies of Hockeim, Johannigsberg, and Auvernat, which it was his duty to provide. He started up at the reiterated demands upon him, and gave directions in accordance with the wants which the revellers were creating for themselves. Then he made an arrangement with his neighbour, who professed an intention to retire, by which he was to call on him at his hostel, at seven precisely; and, in exchange for the titles and address of "Lyderic de Roulemonde, Baron Verlinden of Brabant, captain in the service of the archdukes," he gave his simple name and residence, "Renault Claassen, Tanner's Street, Bruges."

"Well now, let us see!" said Lyderic to himself, as he paced the great square in his way from the town-house to his hostel, "how stands the account? Here I am, on my own good authority and assumption, a baron without a barony—a captain without a troop—a soldier without a service—an adventurer without a sequin! Starting on a race of life and death, unaided, and almost unknown. Discovered in one treachery, and spied upon in another. Going a wooing to a girl I never saw, without introduction or recommendation but these good limbs and this comely face. Heaven give me courage to carry me well through! But I do not feel my heart throb with the bold energy that in such a case would have urged on Ivon. Cursed name! why does it thus cross me, and always in the feeling of my own inferiority? Be it so! Now, at least, I have not his personal rivalry to encounter. And who *are* my rivals? This braggart governor, harsh and hideous as he is—this sneaking burgher, and the like? Out on such scurvy competitors—they cannot stand before me! But *he*, that one, unseen, unknown as he is—the ban of the state upon him!—the curse of the church!—the very heart he dares to sue for, outraged and up against him, by his own confession!—I know not how it is; but, despite of all, the name of Bassenvelt carries a towering charm about it, and my soul sinks as I enter the contest with even the very shadow of that name! But on, Lyderic, on!—all is now at stake! Find fortune in the issue of this cast, and let revenge, in any shape, but soothe me afterwards! Revenge! Why?—wherefore? No matter—no matter. I hate him, loathe

him, for he makes me mine own enemy ; and the wrong which Lyderic does himself, shall be avenged on him whose being is the bane of Lyderic's life ! And now, to baffle his espionage, and follow my own good purposes !”

With these words he entered the hostel, and bedecked himself in his dress suit of dazzling splendour. He carried nearly his whole fortune on his back. But still, as he proceeded towards Rozenhoed House, under the guidance of the less richly appparelled Renault Claassen, he did not strike the earth with that undaunted tread which gives to the mere adventurer the brave demeanour of the hero. And why should their bearing be different ? 'T is but a step—the hazard of a die—a single word that separates them—success !

And now we must turn for a while to her on whom all thoughts and views were, on this occasion, fixed—her from whom we have so long been separate, or rather, joined to by a chain of persons and events apparently remote, but all bearing, more or less, a close connection with her fate.

The moment that Theresa set her foot across the threshold of her father's mansion as its recognised mistress, a total revolution at once took place in her mind. In quitting the convent, where her years of early youth had so quietly glided away, she seemed to throw back upon its walls her infantine habits of thought and action, too indistinct and unsubstantial in themselves to be dignified with the name of character. She had hitherto been but the reflection of others. If at times a spring of original thought seemed to bubble up in her brain, she started with affright at the unseemly boldness in which it had its source. Her occupations and duties had alike been traced for her, and she followed and observed them with a tacit acknowledgment of the supremacy by which they were laid down. Her education was imbibed in silent passiveness, as the earth receives the rains and dews of heaven ; and it was only when the warm sun of freedom shone upon her, that her acquirements burst forth into bloom, and showed her their own value.

One science she knew not, or, at least, so imperfectly, that her knowledge was all but ignorance. Yet she felt within her, as soon as thought became fledged and ventured to soar above the bounds in which it had nestled, a yearning to know the human heart. Her learning, her accomplishments, lan-

guages, embroidery, music — all appeared to her as nought in comparison with that grand study. In her hitherto confined sphere she had few materials for it. The abbess and the sisterhood, moving in the regular circles of their mechanism, offered no contrasts, no points, no angles of comparison. Beatrice alone had furnished aliment for that craving which our heroine felt and loved to feel. In her there was much beyond the conventional common-place of the rest; but that something had displayed itself in a form so abrupt and appalling, that Theresa had been confounded too much for reflection. All the habitual train of her feelings suffered a revulsion: but the elements of thought were thereby brought into play, and her mind seemed to open wide, as if at the pressure of a magic spring. In this Theresa bore an inherited resemblance to her father's character. One marked event, in which she was by chance an actor, brought into life a myriad of sensations, the existence of which she knew not; and she found, deep buried within her own mind, treasures more various and valuable than those which he had discovered in the bosom of the earth.

The night in which she took possession of her turret, elegantly fitted up with all that suited a maiden of condition and wealth, she proved by her whole air and manner that she was calculated to preside, with equal grace and dignity, over the vast establishment in which she had hitherto been regarded but as a child. Every one, from her father down to the lowest menial, was struck with admiration and respect. Nona, who knew her young mistress the best, was more delighted than surprised, for she had watched the budding of the character that now showed a crop of such abounding fruitfulness.

There was another person, too, somewhat affected by, but little interested in, this sudden display of character. This was Madame Marguerite de Lovenskerke, a cousin of Theresa's late mother — a lady of sufficient rank and insufficient means — a person of unblemished conduct and kind manners — one, in short, perfectly qualified to fill the stations of chaperone to the young heiress, and managing mistress of her father's house. Like Beaumont and Fletcher's heroine, "she could do one thousand profitable things: could do well in the pantry; knew how pullets should be crammed;

cut cambric at a thread ; wove bone-lace ; and quilted balls admirably." She had owed much to the kindness and generosity of Siger Van Rozenhoed for a long series of years, and was happy to oblige him, and serve herself by accepting the office which he offered to her. She was, in the best sense of the word, a good woman. Full of benevolence and kindly temper, tinctured, no doubt, in the spirit of her time, with superstition, and somewhat dependent in her notions of female rights and privileges ; and having, withal, a tendency towards the high church and harsh state principles of the dominant tyranny, with doubts of conscience as to the civil and religious pretensions put forth by her friend Van Rozenhoed and the patriot party. It was evident to all observers that Theresa, with due respect to the worthy matron, would soon render her situation in the household nearly a sinecure. Madame Marguerite herself saw this very plainly, in the first hour of Theresa's establishment at home. But the discovery caused her no mortification. She loved ease, and abhorred responsibility ; and, certain that she should find at Rozenhoed House the best and most distinguished treatment, she was quite ready to abdicate all claims to more than the mere precedence of age and experience.

Siger himself felt a new glow of pride and happiness in contemplating his child. His ambitious views for her establishment in life seemed about to be concentrated in some point of reality. His objects seemed at once matured ; and he anticipated, in the days that now approached, the realisation of the hopes, speculations, and labours of his life.

Theresa, the while, began to turn her whole attention to that object which she knew to be uppermost in her father's mind. That was her own marriage ; and she all at once seemed to discover that in such a matter, so contemplated, she was not a personage so unimportant as she had hitherto considered herself. Every circumstance that tended towards that point struck her now with surprising acuteness. The windows of her mind were opened, and every ray of light rushed in. The devoted admiration of Renault Claassen, the avowed pretensions of Don Juan de Trovaldo, and those of several other expectants, would have cleared any film of doubt as to her own attractions and that of her reputed fortune. But there were still two circumstances, very opposite in their nature, which made more impression on her than all the rest

of those late transactions put together. The first was the outrage committed upon her by the companion of Beatrice's flight. This, viewed in every light, appeared little less than sacrilege, whether it regarded the place, her own purity, or the feelings that should have actuated the man towards the victim of his libertine passion. Unmitigated disgust and strong resentment were invariably excited as her thoughts flew back to the subject; and when it was publicly announced by the governor that Count Ivon de Bassenvelt was notoriously the seducer of Beatrice, Theresa irresistibly joined in the execration profusely heaped on him. The other subject was a perfect contrast to this. It was the night song, so deliciously warbled from the canal, while she leant at her turret window, and caught the strains as they rose up in the pure incense of melody and feeling. The voice, though not strong, possessed a power superior to strength. Its tones seemed to come deeper than from the throat. Its cadences were in the heart; and an impassioned breath, to be felt but not described, wafted the strains unerringly to the breast it was meant to penetrate.

Theresa had listened for its repetition night after night, but in vain; and the vulgar serenaders who broke her slumbers only excited dreams of a melody beyond their skill, and awoke her to fits of disappointment and mortification. A fuller explanation of our heroine's sensations must be left to the imaginations which can picture her as she was, and to the feelings of those whose hearts have vibrated to the magic of a sound.

CHAPTER XII.

A BLAZE of light, a profusion of ornaments, mirrors, vases, paintings, plants, and flowers, have been, since luxury and pleasure have gone hand in hand with civilisation, the inseparable accessories of every fête given by refinement, taste, and wealth. Music, in its intoxicating harmonies, splendour in dress, beauty, grace, and gallantry, complete the combin-

ation. And such was assembled in profuse magnificence at Rozenhoed House, on the night we wish to bring back, in all its life and reality, to our reader's comprehension. Every thing that money could procure, consistent with the somewhat incongruous contrasts which distinguished the style of furniture and decorations in those days, and that suited such a mansion, had been amply provided by the gorgeous taste of Van Rozenhoed, subdued and regulated as that had been by the wife who had nurtured it, and the daughter who was now its absorbing object.

The guests, as they entered the square before the house, were dazzled by the lustre of its illuminated front, covered with hundreds of coloured lamps in various fantastic devices, while as many large white wax flambeaux flared from each niche and window. The steps leading to the portico were lined with odorous shrubs. Festoons of flowers were intermixed with various banners that formed a tapestry above, and covered the wainscoting of the entrance hall. The staircase was garnished with the choicest treasures of the greenhouses, not only of Van Rozenhoed but of his friends, who were all proud to contribute towards the decorations of the fête. The lobbies and corridors were thickly planted with the same kind of ornaments; and the guests seemed to wander, from room to room, through passages of shaded and fragrant pleasure-grounds. The soft light from transparent paper lanterns, suspended in the leaves and branches, threw a voluptuous indistinctness around, and formed a soothing contrast to the lustre of the reception rooms, where hundreds of tapers, reflected from chandeliers and mirrors of the costliest manufacture of France and Italy, lighted up the gilded cornices and mouldings, the finest tapestry from the looms of Bruges, rich wrought Turkey carpets, and varieties of ornaments, massive or fragile, such as were at that period poured into the harbours of Holland from the many ships employed in the commerce of the East.

Van Rozenhoed was, as has been before observed, a bountiful patron of the arts; and his house was adorned with busts and statues of exquisite chiseling, and pictures by several of the great artists just then flourishing, at once the monuments of their genius, and the title deeds of their immortality. Numbers of liveried attendants, with the badge of the Rozen-

hoed arms fastened on their sleeves, moved to and fro, serving wines, cordials, and other refreshments suited to the taste of those days, and some which bore a patent of approbation for the palates of all time.

All that was distinguished and respectable among the citizens of Bruges and the neighbouring inhabitants, whether noble or plebeian, be their party opinions or religious differences what they might, had been invited to the fête. The family of Claassen, and many other of his public enemies, as well as the officers of the Spanish garrison, obnoxious as they and their cause were to his most secret prejudices, had been bidden by Van Rozenhoed, with his daughter's full consent. As soon as the chimes from the city clocks told seven, and the carillons from the Stadthouse steeple struck up their cheerful yet somewhat discordant announcement of the hour, many an expectant bosom fluttered with the joy that beats in young hearts longing for a night of pleasure. The arrivals soon became numerous, and in the order suited to the circumstances or taste of the visitors. Some drove on in the few lumbering specimens of carriage-building, which had been but lately established by the nobility or wealthy burghers of Flanders. Others came dragged along in a litter suspended between two poles, in which were yoked as many mules, or horses, one in front, the other in the rear of the coarse vehicle; and in such a machine (as we know by engraved evidence) did the tyrant Alva take his departure from Brussels when he was removed from his ensanguined government. Rude models of those portable chairs, afterwards called sedans, (from their being greatly improved, if not actually invented, in that town,) and upheld by human carriers, bore several of the splendidly dressed townswomen to the scene of the night's festivity. Others came, in attire equally rich, but in more homely state, seated on high back pillions, behind their husbands, fathers, or brothers, on the broad flanks of the Flanders steed, then, as at all times, celebrated for their height and bulk. The cavaliers of quality appeared on heavily caparisoned horses, the saddle-skirts and stirrup-leathers covered with housings of cloth, to save the slashed galligaskins and silk hose from risk of stain or ruffle. Close following the horse's long tail, which swept the pavement, and often making use of it to aid his speed, the varlet of the cavalier invariably was seen adapting his paces to those

of the other serving animal, and always ready to hold the reins and stirrup when his master was disposed to alight. Many of the less gallantly equipped or less pretending youths hurried to the fête on foot, bustling through the streets and squares with swaggering air, not sorry to show their well turned limbs, and hear their rapiers rattling on the stones, as they passed through groups of gazers, of all ages and each sex, attracted towards the scene of such popular and proud display; for the lower orders of Bruges, even in their most desperate rebellions, had ever great pride in the magnificence of their magistrates.

Most of the company had assembled; the music sounded from the several orchestras; the fire-works in front of the house, and the illumination of the gardens, had all begun to display their finest effects, when Lyderic de Roulemonde and Renault Claassen were seen advancing towards the grand entrance, the liveried varlet of the former leading his master's handsome and gaily dressed charger, which the master himself had abandoned, but chose to have paraded after him, while he proceeded arm in arm with his new acquaintance, pleased to display his fine figure and showy dress, in immediate contrast with the less striking and less richly attired citizen.

Once fairly entered into the midst of the splendid scene, Lyderic looked round him with astonishment. He had witnessed entertainments of sumptuous insipidity in Spain, gay carnivals in Italy, and filigree fêtes in France; but he never before beheld such solid elegance as he now gazed on. His first feeling was of mingled pride and avarice, as he indulged a momentary thought that all this might one day be his; and he glowed with the anticipation of success. Renault Claassen threw his eye anxiously across the mass of variegated splendour which filled the spacious antechamber, in search of her whose presence would, in his mind, have eclipsed the whole. But he had to traverse a suite of spacious saloons before he reached the chamber where Theresa, with Madame Marguerite, sat in ceremonious state to receive the presentations of the numerous company.

Van Rozenhoed, in the pride of his hospitality, and in his velvet robes of office, with the broad medal of his dignity hung by a massive gold chain on his breast, took his station at the first door which led into the reception rooms, and there

received each visiter, whose coming was announced by a long file of echoing domestics. Renault Claassen, who knew that he stood, individually, well in the opinion of his host, advanced with modest confidence, and received the welcome of the burgomaster ; yet his heart sunk, as he thought that he never might be allowed to give the pressure of affiliated affection to the hand that thus grasped his in common-place cordiality. He promptly proceeded to introduce Lyderic ; and having performed the ceremony with suitable decorum, he hastened through the many groups that intervened between him and the object whom his imagination pictured beyond them all.

The burgomaster received the newly presented stranger with the courtesy that he felt due to a noble cavalier, correctly recommended. But the secret stirrings of his prejudices, and which were, from private motives, just then particularly active, threw an air of reserve and doubt into his manner, towards any avowed partisan of the archdukes' and the Spanish dominion. Lyderic, considerably elated by the scene around him, and the hopes it had so strongly excited, was resolved to ingratiate himself into the burgomaster's favour. For this purpose he assumed a hypocritical air of respect and diffidence, and avowed that he had not come to the entertainment from mere motives of amusement, but that he attended it for the more serious purpose of advancing the claims of another person, to the honour of an alliance with her, for whom so many an aspirant that night ventured to propose.

On this statement, Van Rozenhoed somewhat abated the reserve of his demeanour ; and inviting Lyderic aside, he led him through the adjoining corridor, by a private apartment, directly to the chamber occupied by Theresa. His ruling foible was flattered by the circumstance of so distinguished a young fellow as Lyderic evidently was, being sent on this embassy ; little doubting that the principal of such a proxy must be some one of considerable rank and dignity. He therefore resolved on introducing him to his daughter as promptly as possible, ere any other might, by some freak or caprice of woman's nature, have caught her fancy, and decided her choice, a matter which, from vague notions glanced at before, he wished to hold in indecision.

Theresa and her kinswoman, surrounded by several of the

most distinguished females of Bruges and its vicinity, occupied an elevated space, or dais, at the upper end of this most richly furnished of the suite of saloons. Several steps led to this platform, and allowed all the company to have a full view of the collected beauty that occupied it; and particularly of her who attracted the admiration of all eyes, and the homage of all hearts.

A canopy of embroidered satin hung above the platform, and a carpet of great price covered it below. The draperies were of the costliest materials; and velvet cushions received the pressure of the light feet peeping from beneath rich flounces of lace and embroidery. Nothing could exceed the elegance in dress which was there displayed; and the proverbial beauty of the women of Bruges appeared concentrated to give effect to the scene.

Madame Marguerite de Lovenskerke sat at Theresa's left hand, her countenance beaming with goodness, and showing faded remains of no mean share of personal attractions. Her figure was, however, becomingly fat for a widow of fifty, and her hair, of unequivocal grey, was plaited across her brow, and evident below her coif, no unworthy trickery having taught her to substitute the false tresses of youth for the natural locks so becoming to age. Her attire was rich, and her ornaments in keeping with it. A large Venetian ivory fan, of exquisite workmanship, and a great luxury in those days, occupied one hand, and the other held a smelling-bottle encased in a cover of gold filigree work, studded with diamonds. Hanging from the wrist of this arm was also observed a riband, which was fastened to the collar of a little fat French dog, whose tresses (for so his hair might be called) hung thickly over him in spiral curls that seemed composed of snow-white silk. He lay on a blue velvet cushion beside that which was occupied by Madame Marguerite's feet; and as he slept, or feigned to sleep, his whole face was hidden under the profuse shadowing of those exquisite curls. His doting mistress threw occasional looks of affection and pride at this favourite, but she gave even more of her admiring attention to the beautiful girl who occupied the chair on her right hand, and who looked, what she was,—the virgin queen of the fête.

Theresa sat on her chair, in the quiet consciousness of grace

and beauty, equally distinct from the insolence of coquetry, and the scarcely less revolting inanity of bashfulness. Yet her pulse beat quick, and her cheek was flushed at times with the genuine emotions of modesty and virtue. She did not feel herself there as a mock personage in a pageant, but as filling a part in the serious drama of life, her performance of which was, perhaps, to decide her lot for ever. She was attired with appropriate elegance, but not in affected plainness. Her robe of Mechlin lace, her veil of silver tissue, thrown across her shoulders, her diamond necklace and ear-drops, and the pearls that were strung through the low-falling ringlets of her bright and almost flaxen hair, were all of exceeding value, but assorting so well with each other, and with the character of the wearer's beauty, that the combination they produced was one of rich simplicity. Theresa's complexion was brilliantly fair. Her eyes were of dark hazel, that tempered, as it were, the dazzling whiteness of her skin, and the vermilion of her lips, and imparted to her countenance a softened seriousness, more dignified and not less tender than the expression given by blue eyes, which are generally found associated with such a complexion. Her fully developed figure was such as a sculptor might have desired as a model; or such, when she moved along in swelling gracefulness, as might fill an intellectual voluptuary with the true and natural delight excited by the association of physical with mental charms. Nor was there less attraction in her lovely form, when reclining, as at present, in her chair; no stiff formality cramping her natural ease, but body, head, and limbs, all taking the attitudes that seemed chosen by the free will of each, and confirmed by the assenting gracefulness of the whole.

Van Rozenhoed ushered in Lyderic to the full contemplation of this scene, and of her who formed its principal feature. He had led him on by a side door that opened close to the foot of the dais, the space before which was now thickly crowded with a mixed assemblage of dames and cavaliers, anxious for the ceremony of presentation, which Theresa seemed to await with a degree of gentle agitation that considerably heightened the effect of her beauty. Madame Marguerite and her surrounding friends conversed with her, in the good-natured intention of lessening her emotion; and as she was not actuated by any wish for display, she betrayed no unseemly timidity or

want of self-command. Lyderic fixed his eyes on her as she thus appeared, and he felt for an instant the full power of her charms. But a startling pang of recollection brought before him the more striking countenance of Beatrice, in all the fire of its enthusiastic character ; and mingled with the thought came the recollection of her cold and dignified rejection of his overture. A flush of angry pride passed hotly across his brow, and was succeeded by a glow of expectant triumph as he looked once more on Theresa. But his glance, as if mechanically, withdrew itself again, and seemed to sink within him, when he recollected De Bassenvelt, and the fearful threat that hovered over his treachery.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

CHAPTER I.

THE actual ceremony of the introduction now commenced. Van Rozenhoed, with no small portion of parental tenderness mixed with his pride, undertaking to offer to his daughter's notice the several claimants for her hand, on her choice depending, as he deeply felt, not only her own happiness, but his. The first person whom he led forward in right of his station, was Don Juan de Trovaldo, who strided up the steps of the platform, the chains and rowels of his gilded spurs and his iron-sheathed rapier trailing after, and his gaunt figure looking disagreeably warlike in his uniform of yellow cloth, slashed with white satin, and splendidly embroidered in passement of gold. The order of the Golden Fleece hung conspicuous, among many others, by a chain passed beneath his highly stiffened ruff; one hand carried a slouched beaver, loaded with ostrich plumes, fastened in front with a clasp of brilliants, and with the other, the governor, as was habitual with him, stroked down his grisly beard, bringing its frizzled consistency as near as might be to a point, towards which the ends of his thick mustachios also tended.

"Theresa, my love," said Van Rozenhoed, firmly but not unfeelingly, "I have the honour of presenting to you Don Juan de Trovaldo, a Spanish captain of repute, and governor of our good town in the name of the archdukes. Don Juan de Trovaldo, allow me to make you known to my daughter."

With these words of ceremony Van Rozenhoed bowed. Theresa rose and courtesied, and the governor made a haughty inclination, which indisputably proved him of the stiff-necked generation of the Trovaldos.

"Young lady," said he, "I am proud of an opportunity of doing homage to your beauty and virtue; and in the plain

guise of a soldier I offer myself and my fortune for your acceptance. I would not see dishonour done to the respectable magistrate of this celebrated town ; and to guard against such, I here announce myself the suitor for your hand, scarcely doubting that others of less name or note will care to oppose my offer by their pretensions."

Stroking his beard again, and grasping somewhat suddenly his sword's hilt, he looked sternly on Theresa, and next on the assemblage round him ; and bowing still more stiffly than before, he turned away, and without quitting the platform entered into conversation with some of the ladies who occupied its seats.

Notwithstanding the menace implied in the governor's words, three or four new candidates pressed forward for presentation ; and foremost among them was a young man of comely appearance, and lively air, who showed nothing of the restraint that might be expected in an avowed enemy, in one of the strongest holds of his mortal foes, on the mere sufferance of a pass of safety that was to expire on the morrow. This was Van Rozenhoed's late apprentice, Arnoul de Grimberghe, who had just obtained the appointment of deputy-chamberlain in the household of Prince Maurice, and was on the eve of setting out for Holland to take possession of his distinguished post. His family was one of the first consequence, and perhaps the most ancient in Bruges ; and they looked forward to his obtaining "the heiress," as the means of honourably improving the dilapidated state of their fortunes, nearly ruined in the civil wars.

Young Arnoul now stepped up to his old master ; and smilingly begged he would put his apprentice forward on this trial for happiness and fortune. Van Rozenhoed shook him cordially by the hand, and said,—

"Arnoul, my honest lad, you know I love you, and wish you success through life. No man need well desire a braver or better son-in-law ; and had I not solemnly vowed to leave Theresa wholly to her own choice, no one should have her father's fair word before you. Theresa, this is my old apprentice and young friend, Arnoul de Grimberghe, a good-hearted, well thinking youth, worthy of the noble house he springs from, and one who has wielded the gold-beater's hammer to no small purpose, as is attested by his new appointment, which need not

be more than hinted at in this presence ;” and here he threw a significant glance at Don Juan, and the circle of grim looking Spaniards, which by this time had gathered round their chief.

Arnoul advanced with a careless air ; and slightly blushing, he made an obsequious bow to Theresa, and a slighter one to Madame Marguerite and the other ladies. He addressed a short sentence to the former, expressive of his admiration and his hopes, in language of general gallantry, that evidently had no deeper inspiration than in the tongue which uttered it. Theresa received it as it was given ; courtesied low ; and turned with perfect indifference from Arnoul, as he stooped to caress Madame Marguerite’s lapdog, and then moved aside to make room for the suitor next in succession.

“The next who does us the honour of offering himself to your notice, my daughter,” exclaimed Van Rozenhoed, with a look of real pride of purse, “is the worshipful Nicholas Zannekin, syndic of the Franc, whose office receives while it gives distinction, in the person of this true-blooded descendant of his great namesake, whose exploits in the three rebellions still live through as many centuries, and who died the death of a real Fleming, on the swords of our country’s tyrants in the immortal fight of Cassel.”

A murmur of applause that had a very seditious sound burst from a portion of the hearers of this patriotic impromptu ; and on Van Rozenhoed’s turning round, he perceived that it was his old enemy Claas Claassen, his four sons, and some of the Protestant party, that had evinced this symptom of sympathy with his allusion. He recovered his composure, despite the frowns that he discovered on the opposite countenances of Don Juan and his subalterns, reflected from those of the late burgomaster, and some of the Spanish faction ; and he handed up, rather closer than was requisite, the grave-looking, and somewhat withered personage so pompously announced. The syndic’s sober suit of tawny kersey, garnished with murrey-coloured silk, contrasted sadly with the gay trappings of the gallants around him ; and his melancholy countenance, as he whined forth his proposal, completed a most doleful yet ludicrous display. The young ladies tittered, while the syndic made his speech ; and even Madame Marguerite would have been inclined to join the gathering laugh, had not the worship-

ful Nicholas Zannekin, in his retreat, untowardly placed one of his feet forward instead of backward, and directly upon the body of the French lapdog. The animal, at all times a keen observer of etiquette, returned the intrusion by a sharp whine, and a most mordicant accompaniment of his needle-pointed teeth, which penetrated in the instant through the syndic's russet shoe, and the rhubarb-coloured rosette which covered it from the instep to the toe. The syndic's natural movement was to seize the wounded foot in his hand ; but as he stooped to catch hold of it, uttering a shrill exclamation of pain, Madame Marguerite bent towards her assaulted pet, and her head coming directly against the syndic's, he quite lost his equilibrium, tottered backwards, and finally fell down the platform steps, the assemblage below most ceremoniously making way for him as he measured his length on the floor.

This accident, little ludicrous to read of, was irresistibly so to look on, as awkward falls of all kinds universally are, even in the most desperate cases of fox-hunting mishaps, where limb or life may be perilled amidst the laughter of the beholders. Van Rozenhoed, however, was little disposed to join in the peal that now arose at the expense of the prostrate functionary ; for he feared that the seriousness of the scene might sink into burlesque. So giving orders to a couple of servants to assist the syndic, he hastened to present Renault Claassen, who offered himself to his notice, anxious of the occasion to shuffle, unobserved, through the ceremony, as a timid man in a modern quadrille slurs over his exhibition in the awful character of "*Le Cavalier Seul.*"

The burgomaster was not more disposed to make any unnecessary display of the young tanner's pretensions ; so he hastily led him forward, and in a few words introduced him to Theresa. Renault Claassen dared not look on her. He essayed to speak, but could not ; and Van Rozenhoed was conducting him back to his former station in a window recess, when old Claas sturdily stepped forward, supported by his three other sons and several of his friends, and loudly exclaimed,—

"Speak out, then, Renault, you chicken-hearted poltroon. Lift up your eyes and look on the lady. Remember, boy, that a hooded hawk never struck the heron. Bear with his bashfulness, young lady. I vouch for his straight-forward honesty when

put to the push. He is a kind youth, and well intended, though somewhat abashed by this fine company and his own faint heart."

He would have continued longer in this strain, which was gradually attracting listeners from all quarters, had not Van Rozenhoed hastily brought forward another suitor, and unceremoniously stepped between the old hide-wetter and Theresa, who felt ashamed of this vulgar parent to the modest youth, whose evident attachment raised a blush of pure emotion on her cheek, and caused her to look after him with an expression of genuine kind feeling.

"Ay!" cried Claas Claassen, observing the blush and the look, "ay! I'll wager fifty florins to a brass stuyver, that, as sure as a tanpit wears the hair from a hide, Renault might rub out all obstacles to the girl's consent, if he had but one spark of his father's spirit, or knew either a lover's trade or his own. She loves the lad; I see it clearly ——"

His discourse was here cut short by some of his more prudent friends, who hustled him deeper into the crowd, advising him to let things proceed quietly, and not awaken the proud suspicions of Van Rozenhoed. Old Claas followed their advice; but loudly muttered, during his retreat, coarse sarcasms against "the upstart impudence of some people, whom he well remembered without a crown in the pocket of their greasy fustian jerkin, yet who were now-a-days ——" but the rest of his reminiscences were stifled in the suffocating perfumery, from which he was anxious of escaping, to the odours of Tanner's Street, and his own bark pits and drying lofts.

In the mean time, Van Rozenhoed was ushering forward a new candidate, in the person of Cornelis Van der Gobble, burgher and ex-burgomaster of Antwerp, partner of one of the richest houses in the India trade, a man of much wealth and few words — a considerable oddity in manners and in person, yet still a man of no small capacity in his way, and one whose conduct in matters of some moment had been, ere then, tried and found good.

This man of the counting-house was either superior to, or unable to understand, the minute distinctions of dress, in those days of such importance to the lowliest pretenders to gentility, and the paramount consideration with persons of fashion.

He was, therefore, one of the worst dressed men in the Netherlands ; that is to say, with regard to the sorting and fashioning of the materials, which were of themselves of the best quality, and ordered by their wearer in no niggard spirit. The suit which he had expressly chosen for Van Rozenhoed's fête was meant to be particularly striking, and it was so. The doublet and mantle were of orange cloth, a colour which he venerated as the emblem of Dutch freedom ; and the effect of which, on the prejudices of others, he gave himself no care to calculate. Pink taffeta linings, ribands and poslo, with lace of crimson and gold, and a profusion of gilt filigree buttons, glared out in every part of his attire. The rosettes of his shoes were also orange, and of huge proportions, as well as those at the knees of his monstrous breeches, which formed an exaggerated specimen of the then existing grotesqueness of Dutch costume.

Van der Gobble was almost a stranger in Bruges ; but his performance at the banquet that day had, in addition to his appearance, excited extraordinary attention. He proved himself unquestionably the greatest eater of the hundreds there assembled ; and amply confirmed the report of the few who recognised him, and which quickly spread around, that he was the most celebrated glutton of Antwerp. When it was further bruited that he had repaired to Bruges for the express purpose of eating his share of that dinner, and afterwards of entering the lists as a suitor for the fair heiress, considerable curiosity was excited, among the female part of the assembly in particular, to obtain a sight of the stranger. Imagination was on the stretch to picture his personal appearance ; and the prevailing fancy endowed him with the most seemly attributes of corporate and corporal distinction — a bald head, broad shoulders, and stout limbs, with jowl and paunch proportioned to his reputation. The surprise of the beholders was therefore not trifling, when they beheld Van Rozenhoed leading forward a tall lank man, of stature most disproportioned with his bulk, if *bulk* it might be called, which was the least possible of fleshy coverings for bone and muscle. There was a mingled expression of sensual and shrewd vivacity in his countenance ; his sharp nose, compressed lips, and lantern jaws, suiting well with small grey eyes, sand-coloured locks and eyebrows, and a stunted crop of thin whitish hair,

that fringed his chin and upper lip in the semblance of a beard.

When this bedizened figure stood up erect upon the platform, out-topping all observers of either sex, the risible inclination of the company not having subsided since the syndic's mishap, became utterly unrestrainable; and Van Rozenhoed hurried through the form of presentation, leading off his protégé without giving him time for the utterance of a sentence, being satisfied, for reasons to be explained hereafter, with having gone through the form of introduction in this case, and reserving all its substantial objects for the person whom he next ushered forth to the attention of his daughter and the company at large. The moment he re-appeared on the steps of the platform leading up Lyderic, the half-stifled bursts of laughter subsided, and a murmur of admiration, whose contrast with the late sounds gave it a tone of respect, acknowledged the effect produced by this new candidate.

Lyderic walked firmly up, in the consciousness of his attractions, and stood opposite to Theresa, and in full view of the assembly; while Van Rozenhoed rehearsed his name and quality, and at once damped expectation and excited curiosity, by announcing that the suitor sued not for himself, but merely came as the representative of another, whose name it was his especial duty to announce, and whose proposals he would presently deliver.

Every one pressed forward at this exordium; and amidst the surprise visibly excited among the ladies, at Lyderic's being but substitute for some yet unnamed claimant, a shade of something resembling disappointment, or wounded vanity, or other weakness of woman's nature, passed for an instant across Theresa's brow. She blushed as she encountered Lyderic's confident gaze; yet she quickly composed herself, and listened with calm demeanour while he spoke.

Lyderic had prepared himself for the part he was now about to perform. Animated with the double motive of serving his own ends, and keeping apparent faith with De Bassenvelt, of whom he felt an undefinable dread, he warily began, —

"Were I, most worthy sir, abruptly to announce to this young lady, in this distinguished presence, the name of him on whose mission I am here, I should fear the consequence

of a resentment not unmerited on my part. I am peculiarly and somewhat hardly situated, between the desire to keep faith with another, and still guard against being identified with his presumption. In the uncalculating warmth of friendship I undertook this task. In the faith of a solemn promise I perform it. But circumstances which have since occurred make me anxious to disown all wilful participation in what now can be considered but an insult. To you, most worshipful sir, and to this amiable object of the general admiration and your own solicitude, I hope to be allowed to offer the only atonement which may extenuate the offence I am forced to bear a part in."

This unusual preface to a proposal of marriage excited a profound attention. The crowd below the platform gradually closed in, and those in the first line invaded the steps which had been hitherto held sacred. Don Juan and the other suitors showed, in different degrees, how much they were excited. Strong expectation was depicted on all countenances; and Theresa felt her bosom heave in rapid rise and fall against the bodice that so gracefully displayed its fair proportions.

Van Rozenhoed, surprised and disappointed, showed an impatient anxiety to hear the name of one denounced by his own ambassador to anticipated failure and disgrace. He hastily said to Lyderic, assuming the semblance of a proud indifference,—

"We are all ready, sir, to listen to the announcement which you prepare us to receive, with unconcern, if not contempt."

Lyderic felt checked by this brief and haughty speech, and withdrew his gaze from Theresa's face. He felt all the awkwardness of his situation; but by a strong exertion he summoned up his courage and said, —

"Trusting to the candour and consideration of all towards myself in this strange juncture, I will mention the name, and then efface the recollection by offering ——"

At this instant a voice exclaimed "Beware!" in a tone neither loud nor menacing, but rather like the involuntary utterance of a well-meant caution. A general start seemed to move the whole assembly; and every eye was quickly fixed upon him to whom the warning was addressed. Lyderic turned hastily round at the mysterious expression, but sought

in vain for an individual on whom to affix its utterance. The buzz which the interruption excited soon subsided, and all looked and listened again, to mark the effect produced on Lyderic, and to catch the name so excitingly introduced. He resumed his position, and addressing himself firmly, but with a soft and humiliated tone, to Theresa, continued, —

“ I know not, fair lady, the source nor the purport of this interruption. I have had a threat to-day already, which passed unheeded by, as this does now, nor shall it thwart a purpose known but to my own heart. To lay that heart, in the warmth of its admiration and devotion, at your feet is the fullest, though a feeble, atonement for the wrong I unwillingly do you, in first putting forward the pretensions to your hand and fortune of him whose suit I come to plead, Ivon de Bassenvelt, Count of Welbasch.”

The half-averted bow with which Lyderic accompanied the mention of this name seemed the signal for a burst of wonderment, indignation, and affright, such as might have suitably followed the incantation of *Duyvels Konst*, as the Flemish language expressively renders our word magic. Ivon de Bassenvelt seemed, in its effects on this occasion, an appellation worthy of the highest place in the muster roll of demonology. It was repeated in a chorus of shrill treble and low bass voices. The whole of the Catholic party, whether patriots or slaves, revolted from the mention of him whose sacrilegious violation of a holy house, and abduction of a child of the church, was now notoriously established. Van Rozenhoed, more particularly irritated, as founder of the polluted convent, no sooner heard Lyderic pronounce De Bassenvelt's name than his whole stock of pride and passion was up, and it would have instantly exploded had not the fiercer elements of Don Juan de Trovaldo's temperament forestalled him.

“ Saints, devils, and demons !” cried he, stamping with such force on the platform as to shake the whole construction, and fiercely grasping his rapier, and half drawing it from the scabbard, “ who or what have we here? Who dares to mention the name of the proscribed and accursed De Bassenvelt? A claimant for the hand and fortune of Van Rozenhoed's daughter? An opponent to my suit! The abductor of my ward! The ravisher — the renegade — the traitor! Know you, Master Magistrate, and ye all who hear me, loyal

citizens and fair dames, that this same De Bassenvelt has gone over to the ranks of the amphibious and lubberly Dutch, thrown off his allegiance to our noble sovereigns, and raised the standard of revolt? Ay, my masters and ladies all, ye may well start and stare, but so it is, and more. He has joined with him that arch and outlawed rebel, Martin Schenck; and this day has brought me news that half Brabant and Hainhault are in arms; St. Andrew's, Crevecœur, and others of the strongest fortresses, in open mutiny; and the whole state in danger by the doings of this dog De Bassenvelt, whom some one dares to stand up for in this goodly company! Who is his spokesman? Let us see!"

With these words he strided forward close to Lyderic, who maintained his post, undismayed by actual fear for personal results, but sorely confounded by the boisterous agitation produced by his speech, which had evidently affected Theresa herself in a most painful degree, so as to leave her no apparent recollection of the offer of his own hand, introduced, as he thought, so cunningly. Somewhat confounded and irresolute as to his best mode of acting, he stood still when the governor approached him, and remained superciliously silent, as he poured forth a torrent of insolent taunts and threats that were meant to crush Lyderic's individual expectations, while in seeming solely directed against De Bassenvelt.

"By the Virgin and the life of my saint!" continued Trovaldo, in conclusion of his tirade, "I doubt, my gallant cavalier, if it be not my duty to arrest you on the spot, as an accomplice of your reprobate employer. You have been recommended well, 'tis true, but I know not what fraud may have imposed on the archdukes' minister. What say you, Mynheer van Rozenhoed? Though not my wont to consult with magistrates in cases of state offence, this touches your private honour, and merits your opinion."

While the governor spoke the speech here recorded, much and various excitement animated his listeners. We have faintly depicted the agitation of the Spanish party at the mere mention of De Bassenvelt's name. But their transports were beyond description at the announcement of his treason. While, on the other hand, the Protestant portion of listeners, who were highly pleased at the carrying off of a novice, felt the perpetrator of that act to be a perfect hero when they

heard he was also a rebel. And even the Catholic patriots, and among them Van Rozenhoed, began, in their own despite, to suffer a conflict of sentiments for and against the culprit, as they viewed his conduct by turns in a religious or a political aspect.

Lyderic de Roulemonde stood before this mass of contradictory feelings as the type of the person who caused them all. It mattered nought what he said, or felt, or intended, relative to Count Ivon de Bassenvelt. He had come there to represent him, and he was there in his stead. He was, therefore, invested with all the responsibility of a proxy, and assailed with the odium, or supported with the good will, of the several factions. As soon as Don Juan had put his question to the burgomaster, the latter, influenced by his joy at the effects of De Bassenvelt's revolt, replied, as he half turned towards Lyderic, —

“Don Juan de Trovaldo, since you thus appeal to me, I must urge my opinions and my influence justly. This gentleman is my guest, and I claim the right to protect him; nor do I see aught in his conduct to deserve rebuke. Though the name of the person whose pretensions he put forward has shocked us all, in reference to one unholy deed, there may be redeeming qualities attached to that name, which Christianity commands us to consider. But this gentleman is at least unsullied by any participation in his former friend's offence; and may perhaps merit a share in whatever redounds to his honour.”

This speech had such evident reference to De Bassenvelt's revolt, that all the patriots were elated with new courage at Van Rozenhoed's boldness, sanctioning their views and identifying himself with them, in his robes of office, and in the very teeth of their fierce and powerful foe. They could not repress their excited feelings; and many voices uttered approving acclamations of the burgomaster's sentiments, while a few, still louder, though less discreet, cried “Liberty!” “A Bassenvelt!” “Our country free!” and similar expressions of open disaffection.

Don Juan, astonished and inflamed at this daring burst of defiance, gnashed his teeth with rage. Forgetting all respect of time or place, he again clapped his hand on his sword, and

was drawing it forth, till arrested by the shrieks of Madame Marguerite and other ladies, in which the loud barking of Fanchon, the French lapdog, shrilly joined, as well as deeper sounds of disapproval, cries of "Shame, shame!" and more personal exclamations of disgust. Almost all the females rose from their seats, and many fled from the saloon; while the male part of the assembly hustled towards the scene of tumult, upsetting or displacing furniture and decorations with little ceremony, and mingling together in a mass of utter confusion.

"My guard, my guard, ho!" vociferated Trovaldo; and his officers rushed round him, repeating his call, and some hurrying in search of the armed men.

"Has the poison then spread thus far, and is the burgo-master's house the rallying point of treason? 'Tis well concerted, but it shall not triumph. No beggarly burgesses shall dare to brave my power. Mynheer van Rozenhoed look to this! This be on your head! I am well warned that emissaries of the Dutch, creatures of the bold rebel Maurice of Nassau, lurk this moment in the town, ripening the too ready minds of some base traitors for revolt. You, sir, captain, baron, or be you what you may, I take for one; and I here arrest you in the name of the sovereign archdukes; but in honour of Don Zeronimo Zaputa, whose introduction you bore, you shall rest secure within the government-house. Mynheer Magistrate, I call on you to bestir yourself, as you prize your head, to seek for and seize the other spies within the city! To arms, officers! To your quarters all! Treble the guards; draw out the garrison! I proclaim the town and suburbs insurgent and rebellious!"

Lyderic was seized by a subaltern Spaniard who demanded his sword. This he readily resigned; for he was by no means displeased with the turn things had taken. His footing seemed secure with Van Rozenhoed — he had avowed his love and tendered his hand to Theresa — and he knew that by one talismanic word he could change the governor from his gaoler into his patron. Pleased with the hope of playing upon all, he submitted to captivity with as much pleasure as other men hail freedom; and making an obsequious bow to Theresa, who amidst the whole tumult had quietly kept her seat, he followed the officer from Rozenhoed House; and was soon installed in

its immediate neighbourhood in a safe chamber in that of the governor.

In the mean time the burgomaster, agitated by a variety of emotions, bore a good countenance as he confronted the imperious governor.

"Don Juan," retorted he firmly, as Trovaldo ceased to speak, "at your own peril be these outrageous proceedings. I protest against them in the name of the citizens whose rights I represent. You affront our peaceable town, and invade our privileges, in stigmatising our burghers as spies and insurgent revolvers. Your own violence has caused this scandalous disturbance, which be on your own responsibility. As to me, you have personally done me insult and wrong; turning my house into a place at arms, and outraging our festivities. Take warning, then, never as a visiter to place your foot across my threshold; never as a suitor to raise your thoughts towards my daughter. The word is said, señor, — so frowns and menaces will avail nothing. I stand on the rights of the city and my own integrity."

He then turned towards Theresa and the other ladies, and speaking to the company at large, proclaimed that the various other gentlemen, who had meant to honour his daughter, in being presented specially to her, must defer their introduction till the morrow, the trouble thus excited making the present time unfitting. He then begged his guests not to be alarmed by what they had just witnessed, promising them the whole protection of the civil power, and inviting them to pass to the ball-rooms, where the dancing should now commence, in spite of the rude violence of the governor.

Trovaldo, daring and impetuous as he was, felt that he had gone too far: but, in his haughty insolence, he could not retract; and, galled by Van Rozenhoed's scornful rejection of him, he plunged deeper still in his harsh proceedings. His guard had by this time entered the house, and mingled fiercely with the guests, many of whom fled, and among them several of Theresa's intended suitors, who had shrunk back on Don Juan's first defiance, and were now glad to withdraw from a contest with him altogether; and it was soon proved that in doing so they were prudent, if not valorous or gallant, for his next orders were for the seizure of all those who had braved his menace, and been presented to Theresa.

Renault Claassen, whose voice was clearly recognised in the seditious cries, and Nicholas Zannekin, the discomfited syndic of the Franc, whose rebel name was in itself a plea for the despotic deed, were instantly laid hold of, and carried off in close custody. The arrest of Van der Gobble, as a suspected stranger in the city, and young Arnoul de Grimberghe, was next commanded ; but they had both disappeared. Don Juan left the house, followed by his myrmidons and the greater part of the Catholics ; but many of the patriot citizens remained, resolved to support their magistrate, and, by following up the pleasures of the night, at least in seeming, stamp the violence of the governor with the mark of their contempt as well as reprobation.

During the bustle of this whole scene, annoying, irritating, and even alarming as it was, Theresa had not shown one symptom of feminine weakness. She looked conscious, but not vain, of the presence of mind more becoming to the gentlest of her sex than the sometimes involuntary and sometimes forced display of fainting fits and hysterics. From the moment that Lyderic had named De Bassenvelt, she neither spoke nor screamed, while all around her was confusion and dismay ; but she observed and noted all, and felt her heart throb with the various emotions excited by what was said and done. Trovaldo's insolence — her father's indignation — the different effects produced on the visitors by the news so suddenly announced — the various overtures made to her, were sufficient materials of anxiety. But rising above all was the strongly revived remembrance of Beatrice's flight and the personal indignity she had herself then suffered, which, now brought home to her by its perpetrator's audacious offer, oppressed her with a stifling sense of pain. She feared to utter a sound or move a limb, lest the swell of pride that heaved her bosom might have caused her to burst into tears. Seizing the first possible opportunity, when Trovaldo and his followers stalked away, and while her father and Madame Marguerite were employed in tranquillising the guests that remained behind, Theresa stole from the saloon, and hurrying by a private stair that led to her own turret, she passed through its low door, and took refuge in the garden.

The numberless tapers within the house, and the torches and lamps ranged along the balustrade, poured a flood of light

on the basin and neighbouring bridge and quays, and brought out into bold relief every object of the scene formerly described. The long poplar colonnade that lined the Duyver — the towers of Nôtre Dame — the governor's house — the Dominican cloister, and the several private buildings intermixed with these, seemed looking out upon the scene in which they all formed prominent objects; while the clear bosom of the basin mirrored them again in inverted accuracy, and completed the beauty of a view exquisite in its kind.

The thick foliage of the full-grown shrubbery concealed Theresa from the observation of the thousands of spectators who lined the edges of the basin, gazed from the neighbouring windows, or promenaded on the quays, catching glimpses of Rozenhoed House through its veil of light, and speculating on the fate and fortune of its beautiful young mistress, whom they fancied at the moment revelling in admiration and happiness. Not one among them saw her as she hastily passed under the branching canopy of lilacs and laburnums, entered one of the arbours, and, throwing herself on its carved-wood seat, gave a full flow to the rush of tears that she was no longer able nor willing to restrain.

The relief was instantaneous; but she still wept, even while the excitement passed away. Her tears no more gushed forth in bitterness; but fell like the showers that are scattered from an exhausted thunder cloud, so light that they dissipate into mist before they can reach the earth. Indulging this innocently voluptuous mood, Theresa still sat, her arms resting on the rustic supporters of her gothic chair, and her cambric handkerchief to her face, when she started at the sound of some one breathing close beside her, in the momentary interval of a break in the music which now softly issued from the ball room. She looked up, and saw, in an attitude of respectful anxiety, a figure dressed in black, which she immediately recognised for that of Lambert Boonen, the young man whom her father had hastily introduced to her as his new apprentice, while she passed through a corridor from her turret, just before the arrival of the first visitors that evening. She had then scarcely observed the modest looking youth, and had not perceived or thought of him since. She was startled, as we have said, but not displeased at his present appearance. The light, streaming through every interstice of leaves and

branches, showed his face and figure plainly ; and she saw, with the quickness of a woman's glance, that his attitude and features were expressive of eager respect and suppressed admiration.

We have shown that Theresa was not by nature a coquette ; but she was acutely sensible to the odour of that incense which is thrown up by the heart before the throne of beauty. She had been not quite intoxicated, but both soothed and elevated, by the homage already paid her ; and there was something interesting in the eloquent and not ungraceful expression that pervaded the face and form of the young man now before her. She therefore listened with a softened attention, while he proffered a few words of apology for his intrusion, and expressed his fears that she might have been indisposed.

In the words thus uttered, there was nothing that would not have been common-place from the lips of a common-place person ; but there was an insinuating air in their expression, and a tone in the voice that spoke them, that caused Theresa a thrill of surprise and pleasure. She felt convinced that the utterer of this short sentence, and the serenader of a few nights back, were one and the same. There was nothing in the discovery that actually touched her heart ; but it affected her imagination—and the road between them is soon and easily traversed. Theresa could not be insensible to her own singular and interesting situation in life ; and, like all persons who unite sensibility with talent, she had aspirations beyond mere matter-of-fact, which, for want of a better name, we must call *romantic*. She was, as has been sufficiently seen, quickly alive to sudden impressions ; and she now felt strongly affected by the combination of place and circumstance in which she thus found herself. As to the young man who stood beside her, she had not time to form any speculation. She could only conceive the sudden thought that he, like the rest, admired her, and run in her mind a rapid contrast between the turbulent and proud display she had just escaped from, and the calm sincerity of look which blended so well with the melody of his voice. A moment sufficed for this ; and with no longer delay she answered his address as briefly as he had spoken it. She thanked him for his attention, and assured him that she had only felt passinglly incommoded by the heat of the rooms.

"Enough took place there, indeed," replied he, "to cause the gentlest blood to boil with more than passing emotion!"

"Were you, sir, within the saloon just now?" asked Theresa, led on to prolong the conversation by the animation of the apprentice's words, which seemed so inconsistent with his timid air and his plain, unfashioned dress.

"At the wish of my very worshipful master, I did for a space mingle with the throng within. Unwisely, perhaps, for I gazed too long, methinks, and heard too much, to suit with the calm tenor of a student's life."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Theresa, involuntarily, and half playfully, for she felt a rising sensation of amusement at the vivacity with which the apprentice confessed his feelings.

"Indeed I did!" replied he, with stronger emphasis; "my eyes took in large draughts of beauty, while my ears were filled with words of daring insolence. My heart seemed to imbibe each and all, and it swelled with opposing feelings. I could have laid down life to avow myself the champion of her, at once so honoured and so outraged."

The energy with which this was uttered changed the whole current of Theresa's thoughts. She found it no longer ludicrous, nor was it at all alarming. Yet she felt startled; and she looked enquiringly towards the speaker's face, as he finished his phrase. She saw it lighted up with animation. His eyes sparkled, his lips quivered, and his attitude was full of spirit. Theresa no longer marked the plainness of his costume, nor the inelegance of the black skull-cap, which gave a baldness of look to his countenance, peculiarly disfiguring at an epoch when a full growth of curls formed the common (as they are at all times the most becoming) ornament of either sex. She could only mark the unequivocal expression of admiration pervading his face; nor was she displeased to see it subside into one of abashed humility, as his eyes caught hers.

The momentary impulse was to rise and retire; and as she stood up, and he respectfully made way for her withdrawal from the arbour, she asked, with a gracious tone, if he did not mean to rejoin the festivities?

"No," replied he; "I have no taste for pleasures like those. I am about to take possession of my turret, and must there forget its neighbouring enjoyments."

"Well, well, sir," said Theresa, assuming rather than regaining a lively air, "even in a turret like yours, I hope some enjoyment may be found, for I am the occupier of its fellow here."

"Are you?" exclaimed he, eagerly. "Then it is you whom I am proscribed from noticing, by word or look."

"Me, sir!" cried Theresa, in extreme surprise, and no small curiosity. "By whom can such strange prohibition be decreed?"

"By my reverend relative the prior, and my worshipful master your father. It is the strict condition on which I enter in possession of my place."

"And you have thus already forfeited your tenure?" said Theresa, with a still more natural tone of gaiety, for the prompt frankness of the young student unequivocally amused her.

"Ah, lady! what would I not forfeit for the happiness of one moment such as this," replied he, in a tone of such firmness, and such softness combined, that it told there was a depth of truly-felt emotion far below. Theresa thought the words now, as well as the voice that breathed them, seemed to penetrate her breast; and without again looking on the apprentice she hurried from the arbour, and was in a moment more within the house again.

CHAPTER II.

LONG sounding peals from the several steeples of Bruges proclaimed that it was midnight. Some, breaking in on those that had first struck the hour, baffled by their difference of tone the calculation of the sleepy citizen, or racked the head of the invalid, who thought the noise interminable. Others of the balance clocks, whose machinery, though invented in the place, had not gained the precision of those of England at the same period, sent out their sounds many minutes after the earlier ones had ceased, giving the lie to their veracity, or proclaiming their own falsehood. In these latter, however,

anxious lovers, who had stolen to their rendezvous on the earliest summons of the first, wished to repose their faith; listened with eager ear for the footsteps, or the opening lattice of their mistresses, and disowned the premature sounds that had thrown reproaches on their punctuality. Faint tollings from the bells of those monasteries where midnight mass was performed roused up the Cenobite brothers to their drowsy orisons. The clatter of arms, and the tramping of harnessed men, told that the patrols and guards were on the alert, while, mingling with all, the carillons chimed from the Stadthouse towers, bidding defiance at once to harmony and time.

Such were the only sounds that were to be heard, for no motive but the two most powerful of all, love and piety, could induce the inhabitants openly to brave the governor's commands, that all were to be in bed two hours before that time. Such were the orders proclaimed by beat of drum and blast of trumpet, almost immediately after Don Juan had so abruptly quitted Rozenhoed House. In a short time the streets were cleared; and the thousands who gazed at the external brilliancy of the burgomaster's fête were hurried to their homes at the point of the pike, overpowered with astonishment at this breach of the tranquillity which had so long reigned in the city. In the very face of an order of things so outrageous and insulting, Van Rozenhoed and his friends found it impossible to keep up the mockery of pleasure or indifference. The dancing was abandoned almost as soon as commenced, the supper, so splendidly prepared, was scarcely tasted; and the chief part of the guests, chafing with disappointment and anger, sullenly withdrew. Long before the calculated time the lights disappeared in Rozenhoed House; the external illuminations were extinct; and instead of the broad blaze that had lighted up its immediate neighbourhood, all was surrounding darkness, save the glimmer of a couple of lamps which streamed from the turrets, and quivered like blades of fire deep in the waters of the basin.

In a private parlour, which communicated with the suite of banqueting-rooms, and also by a narrow staircase with the apprentice's turret, Van Rozenhoed now sat in close conference with two persons widely contrasted in mental and bodily distinctions, but equally interested in the subjects discussed, and ardent in the pursuit of the objects they embraced.

These two persons were Wolfert, prior of St. Andrew's, and Cornelis van der Gobble, Theresa's nominal suitor, but in fact the secret ambassador from the patriot citizens of Antwerp to those of the same party in Bruges, for the purpose of organising a simultaneous revolt, in support of the grand plan of operations then on the point of execution by Prince Maurice and the States General of Holland.

As soon as the violent conduct of Don Juan de Trovaldo had broken up the night's festivities and dispersed the company, Van Rozenhoed, in his quality of burgomaster, had assembled most of the other authorities of the place in one of the saloons of his house; and there, amidst floral decorations and emblems of mere pleasure, a civic council was held on grave matters of constitutional debate. Eschevins, syndics, and greffiers pondered with their chief magistrate on rights and privileges, statutes and prescripts; and two or three hours were consumed in the discussion of the measures best to be pursued. It was finally agreed that a magisterial remonstrance should be instantly forwarded to the governor by the hands of the chief eschevin, complaining of the flagrant breach of the city privileges by the arrest of Renault Claassen, a free burgher; and of those of the Franc, (a large district without the walls, governed by its own officers,) by that of the Syndic Zannekin, on the mere verbal order of Don Juan, unbacked by the warrant of the burgomaster, signed by his hand and stamped with the city seal, as stipulated in the declaration of rights, granted last by Philip the Good, Count of Flandres in 1437, and acknowledged and confirmed by every successive sovereign, including the present archdukes. The proclamation by drum and trumpet was also complained of as a serious grief; and the consequent attain against the public liberty insisted on as utterly intolerable.

Independent of this, a formal complaint was agreed to be, in due form, indited against the tyrannous doings of the governor; and it was determined to have this carried and laid at the feet of the archducal throne with all possible solemnity, by a deputation consisting of Van Rozenhoed, as chief burgomaster, and several of the official persons and principal citizens, whose political feelings made them anxious to profit by this crisis for the furtherance of the good cause. The preliminary heads of this important proceeding being agreed on,

its final arrangement was adjourned till the morrow; the eschevin was despatched with a due escort of the city halberdiers, arquebusiers, and all the requisite formalities of corporation etiquette; and then it was that Van Rozenhoed retired into the secrecy of his private room, where he found his confidential co-operator the prior, with Van der Gobble, who had there taken refuge, anxiously waiting his coming, for the deliberation of still more momentous matters than those already noticed.

"Well, well, my son, does not all this look well? Could our fierce don, with all his obstinacy, have built a wall more solid against which to knock his head?" exclaimed the prior, as Van Rozenhoed entered.

"Heaven and St. Andrew be praised!" replied the burgomaster, "the furious bravo has overshot his mark. We have now plain reason on our side, as well as just cause for revolt. The whole world will applaud and uphold us. But I dread the outrages that this tyrant governor may inflict on our imprisoned fellow-citizens. Poor young Claassen ——"

"What of him, my friend? you fear he will escape, do you mean? St. Andrew forbid! No, let Don Juan rather cast him into his deepest dungeon! Well would it be for the city that so little worth an individual perished, to confirm her cause of complaint."

"Perished, holy father! Please Heaven our cause needs not such a sacrifice! The poor lad! You make me shudder — some instant step must be taken to save him — I will myself hasten to the Stadthouse."

"What would you do? Is this Siger van Rozenhoed? the chief burgomaster of one of the first cities of Flanders? Would you lay your dignity and that of your office, of your very city, at the feet of this Spanish satrap? Bethink you of the cause at stake, not of a heretic tanner such as this. Would you have young Renault for your son-in-law? Were *you* alone blind to the look that Theresa gave him in return for his offer to-night — did *your* ear only refuse to listen to her sigh?"

As the prior asked the first of these questions, he caught the retreating burgomaster by the arm; pressed it closely as he continued, and whispered the latter interrogatories, with an emphasis that was meant to sound deeper than on the

tympanum. He did not miscalculate its effects. Van Rozenhoed shrank back from the insinuation, as we have seen him once before do, as though it contained the serpent's sting and cunning both.

"Come, my old and tried friend," continued the prior, "let us be men on this occasion; we are entering on a serious game, and we must play it boldly. Think you that Flanders may be freed without the loss of lives? Trust me, good Siger, that a few victims to this governor and his like are worth as many hundreds lost in battle. The axe that might strike off young Claassen's head would ring an echo in the heart of every citizen of Bruges, and rouse them to fury. He were well out of the way."

The burgomaster, with a strict sense of justice and a kind heart, was nevertheless but a burgomaster! and being made of the same sort of stuff with other master-pieces of humanity, was subject to the same frailties as they. He therefore listened more calmly to the prior's reasoning; and a notion flashed across him that even if young Renault did not choose to plunge into the gulf and save the city, he might be conscientiously shoved into it by others. This was a passing idea, the mere wind of the arrow shot by the prior's skilful hand. It had not acquired the consistency of thought; nor must we do Van Rozenhoed injustice by prematurely saying that he would ever act on the suggestion. Without any pause that might betray the effect of the prior's words, he said, —

"Then our respectable friend the syndic of the Franc? — can we abandon him? and if evil befall him, who may serve us in his stead, to transcribe our secret resolutions and regulate our correspondence?"

"Be satisfied on that point too, my friend: ready hands and clear heads are never wanting in a good cause. You have within call this moment, ay, within reach, as trusty and able a clerk as Nicholas Zannekin, and one with youth, spirit, and energy withal, to aid us in the most perilous emergency, — one worth a dozen such syndics."

Van Rozenhoed looked incredulously round; and he could scarce repress a smile, despite his anxiety, when his eye fell on Van der Gobble, who had sat silently during the colloquy, his elbows resting on the table, his chin supported on his palms; his lengthy countenance looking a living antithesis to

the moral qualities vaunted by the prior, and every visible portion of his frame proving its unsuitableness to the picture so spiritedly sketched.

"You doubt me, or think I palter with you, my good friend. Put my recommendation to the test—open yon door, and call your apprentice, and you will find *him* all I have described."

Again did Van Rozenhoed start at the prior's words. "Youth, spirit, energy," mentally repeated he; and he asked himself if these were the qualities most prominent in Father Wolfert's recommendation of his nephew the evening of his introduction. But there was no time now for qualms, and it was not the season for questions. He was embarked and committed every way, public and domestic, and he felt the prior's influence over him to be more than ever in the ascendant. He did not, however, immediately follow his suggestion, but replied to it by asking if it would be prudent to trust an inexperienced boy with matters of such moment as they had in hand?

"Most surely," answered the prior; "for instruments to act with, always choose among the young. Honour makes them faithful; pride zealous; and hope persevering. Selfishness does not tempt, nor misanthropy chill them. These are the vices of age, (Heaven guard us from them!) and Zannekin touches on its limits. Lambert Boonen will make a better secretary and more useful agent."

"But some preparation will be required to teach the boy his duty," suggested Van Rozenhoed.

"He could teach us, my friend! he has nought to learn, believe me. I know nothing of our negotiation with the States that is not known to him. Nay, start not—there's no danger in the boy. His whole soul is in our cause."

"Reverend father, you know how I honour your wisdom, nor can I longer doubt the fitness of this young man for all we may intrust to him! 'Twas Lambert, no doubt, who warned your reverence of these indications in my daughter's looks, alluded to just now!"

"It was, it was, my friend. The lad's a keen observer; and he has the honour of your house already too much at heart not to mark and make known to me so evident a sign of its danger. He overcame his dislike to gaiety and pleasure,

commonly so called, and looked in upon the splendour of your fête, just long enough to see what all observed but you."

"Had his eyes no other object? Did nought save Theresa's looks and sighs attract his observation?" asked the burgomaster, with an ill-concealed suspicion in his tone.

"Ay, that there did, Mynheer van Rozenhoed. The insults of our despot governor, the daring of that strange baron who made De Bassenvelt's name a cloak for his own designs, did not escape the inmate of your turret. He glows with indignation to see you thus abused in your own and your daughter's person, and would joyfully be champion to you both, to punish those who do you wrongs. As I landed from my boat and paced your garden walks two hours gone, the youth recounted all that had passed, and proved himself worthy of your patronage and sensible of the honour it confers."

"Indeed the youth has shown himself in this all that may be approved," said the burgomaster, alive to his cassocked friend's way of putting the matter.

"I tell you, my good friend," rejoined the prior, "he may in such times as open on us now be trusted to the very core; cherish him, once more I tell you. You may need so true, so stanch a follower."

"Does your reverence, then, counsel my calling the youth from his slumber to assist our conference now? So vouched for by you, I am willing to place my whole trust in him; and worthy Mynheer van der Gobble knows too well your reverence's sagacity to have scruples on the score of risk, I am sure."

This last assertion, interrogatively put, was answered by a profound nod of the head, which implied assent on the part of the Antwerp deputy. The prior replied, —

"Call, call the boy, my worthy, yet somewhat over-cautious friend, nor fear that he sleeps. I have warned him that he should be wanted. And look ye through the crevice of this lattice here; see if his lamp be not burning; nor suppose he winks an eye or nods while he waits my bidding or your service."

The burgomaster applied his eye to the crevice, and peeping first in the direction of the apprentice's turret, then instantly turning his look towards the other, he exclaimed briskly, —

"I see the light — and by the mass ! asking pardon of your reverence and St. Andrew, a twin gleam is shooting from Theresa's chamber, and mingling with the other in the water's surface."

"A good omen, my old, my excellent friend !" said the prior. "May the lights of thy house and the stars of thy fortune ever blend together in mild conjunction, and shine reflected in thy prosperity and happiness !"

"Amen !" murmured Van der Gobble, with the responsive readiness and well assumed seriousness of a keen diplomatist, as the prior raised his hands in accompaniment with the blessing which seemed to burst spontaneously from his lips. Van Rozenhoed imagined no meaning in the allusions it contained, but such as his superstition-tinctured mind was always ready to draw from good or evil signs, connected with his veneration for the church, and his uneducated hankering after the sublime absurdities of astrology and magic.

"A benediction from your reverence's lips sounds like the warranty of Heaven, even as of old it spoke its will through the voices of the apostles and the saints," solemnly exclaimed he, as he bowed low to the priest who had thus worked on his long-studied weaknesses ; and he added in a livelier tone, "Nor will I reject the inference your clear sightedness draws from this accidental analogy of mean things with high. I take this union of lights as a sign of success in our great cause ; and your nephew's fortunes shall join with mine, even as the beams of his lamp mingle unconsciously with those of my daughter's. I promise this to your reverence — my faith is pledged — and it shall be the youth's fault, not mine, if his fate be untoward."

"Trust him, trust him !" exclaimed the prior, in unconcealed delight. "I know the value of that pledge, Van Rozenhoed ; it is enough. Now then, let Lambert join us."

The burgomaster opened the low door which led to the turret stair, ascended it about half way, and in a tone more fatherly than magisterial, he said,—

"Master Boonen, — Lambert, my lad, you are called for. His reverence your uncle, and your friend Siger van Rozenhoed, await your presence in the parlour below. Haste you, haste you, — matter of moment requires your aid."

The burgomaster returned to his fellow-counsellors, followed by his apprentice, whose active foot trod close on his master's heavy step.

"A ready and quick-eared youth, by St. Andrew," cried Van Rozenhoed, as he looked round and saw the apprentice at his heels. "Come in, Lambert. Thy right reverend relative and patron has informed me and our valued friend here, the ex-burgomaster of Antwerp, that thou art not ignorant of what is known but to few. Thy young shoulders may carry an old head, and truly methinks that skull-cap of thine promises a store of wisdom. A crop of perfumed curls may better suit our Flanders' fops; but some heads produce hair and others brains, my good Lambert; and thine is of the latter mould, or much I marvel. Now, my respected friend, and reverend prior, what have we first to touch on? The local subjects of the city's rights are well got through. The eschevin has ere this delivered our protest to the governor. To-morrow will see our remonstrance fully fashioned and fit to be sent forth. But now more momentous matter is on hand. Mynheer van der Gobble, what have you to unfold in behalf of the good town you here represent? In what is our co-operation to be made most effectual? When are we to communicate with the deputy from the States, whose arrival in Bruges you this evening announced to me? His reverence and myself anxiously wish to enter on these questions."

"Brother Rozenhoed, I have hearkened attentively to all that has lately passed between yourself and his reverence here. I am confident in the faith of all I now see and hear. But much it wonders me that one essential preliminary to our conference has been overlooked — the *primum mobile* of all that leads to good. You have not, it would seem, commanded supper to be forthcoming?"

"By St. Andrew, and I had quite forgotten it!" replied the burgomaster to this reproach. "My brain has been so busy with this night's disturbance, that verily it has not had time to think of the stomach. But we shall be soon provided with wherewithal to meet your wishes and wants, respected friend. The brutal conduct of our governor in spoiling a feast has at least secured us from fasting."

The burgomaster then stepped to the door of the parlour, and calling for Jans Broeklaer, his most confidential and

trusty domestic, he desired him to furnish a repast forthwith, of the rarest preparations made for the uneaten supper.

"How many covers, may it please your worshipful excellency? Two, I suppose, one for his reverence the prior, and another for your excellency's worship?" asked Jans, giving the new magistrate his full measure of respect.

"Thou art a bad accountant, Jans — four will be required. Master Boonen, the apprentice, makes one, and Mynheer van der Gobble another."

"I ask your excellency's pardon," replied the serving man; "I did not know of the young gentleman of the turret being of *such* a party; and I suspected that the larded leveret and the compôte of French prunes had satisfied mynheer's appetite, while your worship and their honours the eschevins were disputing in the yellow saloon."

"Jans Broeklaer, you have served me long enough to have known the difference between disputation and discussion — but let that pass! I knew not that my Antwerp friend had been so well cared for; and it seems he himself forgets it. But memory keeps a slippery hold, they say, of eaten bread. Four covers, Jans, and quickly!"

As the burgomaster stepped back into the parlour, he heard Van der Gobble finishing a short dissertation on the positive necessity of eating a hearty meal as a prelude to business, his concluding words (being a quotation, as he said, from John de Heurn, of Utrecht, one of the greatest physicians of the day,) sounding to the burgomaster's ear quite as hollow as the argument they were meant to enforce, and marvellously so, considering the solid supply so lately introduced into the cavities of the speaker's stomach. Van Rozenhoed announced the quick approach of the ready prepared supper; and his hungry guest then said,—

"Now matters move *ad norman exactus*, and good results may follow. And it is now time to inform you, my worthy and worshipful host, that Mynheer Hans Hoogstraaten, whose arrival in your good town I told you of to-night, is in actual waiting on our leisure, and ready for the call that summons him to our conference."

"How's this?" asked the burgomaster. "In waiting! The worshipful Mynheer Hoogstraaten of the Hague, the licensed and accredited agent of the States General of Holland

to the secret confederation of Flanders and Brabant in waiting, like a common varlet! Forget you the danger of any one being unhoused, in opposition to the arbitrary proclamation of our misgoverning governor? Let me fly to give him entrance!"

"Save yourself all trouble and anxiety on that score, mine host — my Dutch friend is safe lodged above in Master Boonen's chamber. While you conferred with the authorities within, he came here in his reverence's boat, and took his place in the turret."

"What! then your reverence knew of Mynheer Hoogstraaten's being here; and you, too, Master Boonen! Verily, it seems that Siger van Rozenhoed, the first magistrate of Bruges, is but the lowest person in his own house — me-thinks ——"

"Nay, nay, my ever excellent friend," interrupted the prior, in a tone of coaxing authority, which the burgomaster never could resist, "be not unreasonably offended for a seeming liberty taken with you. The safety of us all required secrecy to the movements of the distinguished stranger; and could we have called you from your conference to tell his coming, and so betray both ourselves, and him, and you? This must not be, although it proceeds from the proud sensitiveness natural to high station," or he might have added, from the painful solicitude inseparable from low birth.

But the burgomaster was appeased, and at the same time pleased, and he forthwith mounted the turret stairs, a lamp in his hand, to conduct to the parlour the truly important personage we have now to introduce to our readers; and he was speedily heard on his return; and spoke as he descended, —

"This way, this way, mynheer; the stair is somewhat narrow, and turns sharp by this oriel window; but every step is smooth and safe, being individually placed under the eyes of my old friend Van Block himself, chief architect of our town, and master of the worshipful company of masons, stone-cutters, bricklayers, and builders. Every square inch in my house, from garret to cellar, is as sound and sure as though the respected architect had sworn to the goodness of his materials, like Jean Ruysbroek, the constructor of the Stadthouse at Brussels, whose oath is to be seen registered in the city archives."

"In good truth, mynheer," answered the stranger, "your mansion is, as far as I can judge, worthy of the station of its owner and the reputation of its architect. *He* had no need to hang himself when his work was finished, as vulgar belief assures us Jean Ruysbroek did."

"Now, mynheer, three steps more," resumed Van Rozenhoed, "that is the last. Your excellency is heartily welcome to Bruges, and to my poor habitation. Witness my hand, which I offer to you, in our true Flemish fashion, with the heart in its palm!"

The stranger, as he entered the parlour, accepted and returned the cordial shake of the burgomaster's fist, promptly remarking his grand failing; although we hope, for the sake of Van Rozenhoed, that he was not disposed, like a witty satirist of two centuries later, to believe that —

"The sin that the devil likes best
Is the pride that apes humility."

The stranger smiled and nodded familiarly to the three other associates, who all rose as he entered; and he stepped forward towards the table with an air of authority that seemed suited to the place of honour, had there been such. The burgomaster came close to him for the purpose of offering a seat; but he literally seemed to stand on no ceremony, for he quietly took possession of the large stuffed chair, covered with purple morocco leather, which was usually considered sacred for the use of the burgomaster himself. Van Rozenhoed, always as prone to yield to an assumption of authority as to put forward his own when no competition existed, took an unarmed chair, which, however, held its back as high as the best, and placed himself beside the table, where the prior, the apprentice, and Van der Gobble had seated themselves, on a signal from the more important personage whose precedence they implicitly admitted.

CHAPTER III.

THE stranger looked, with the exception of the apprentice, the youngest of the party. Yet he took as his own the evident lead of all, with no forced or offensive presumption, but with a matter-of-course carelessness, which even high talent, unallied with high birth, can rarely adopt over age. He was in appearance scarce five and thirty. His complexion was of the best kind of Dutch, — fair and florid. His forehead was high and broad, and not thickly covered with light brown hair; but this inclination to baldness betrayed no wrinkle on his front, nor did any lines appear on his cheeks, beyond the verge of his mustachios and formally cut beard, except the seamed mark left in one of them by a bullet wound. His light blue eyes looked clear and intelligent, but they were not of that kind which seem to penetrate the minds of those they gaze on, and turn back the prying glance that would read their secrets. They rather expressed a free and frank intrepidity, and accorded with the air of open-browed courage, which seemed to stamp the stranger more of a soldier than a statesman. His whole bearing was decidedly martial, yet his dress bespoke a wealthy, but by no means an elegant, civilian. It was not of the ludicrous fashion, or flagrant bad taste, of Van der Gobble's. It was plain and of fine materials. But the burgomaster thought, as he keenly eyed the wearer, sitting so much at ease in his own chair, that his kersey suit might have been more characteristically supplied by a buff doublet, or covered with a coat of mail. Having a considerable respect for the profession of arms, the chief road to distinction in those times of warfare, Van Rozenhoed was not the less disposed to give his newly introduced acquaintance every possible share of attention and respect.

Jans Broeklaer now appeared, and set busily to work making preparations for the supper table, first whispering in his master's ear, "Five covers, I suppose, your worship?" for he was a matter-of-fact fellow, who did nothing without orders.

"Certainly," replied the burgomaster, who liked his servant the better for having no opinion of his own.

"So, so; we are to discuss our business with our supper, it seems," said Mynheer Hoogstraaten gaily; "a good plan, by Saint George! I am marvellously willing and ready too. Your bustling town, Mynheer van Rozenhoed, and the worthy prior's quiet cloister, have been alike unfavourable to the indulgence of gross appetite, such as I plead guilty to. I have been half famished in the midst of plenty, and find no great relish in this service of ambuscade. But we must do our duty, gentlemen, whether in the field or the trenches, in the open plain, or in the covered way."

Van Rozenhoed was confirmed in his notion as to his new guest's calling, by this soldier-like phraseology; and his confidence in him, and the cause he had embarked in, rose even higher than before.

"Sir," replied he, "your chivalric bearing glads my heart. I am happy to see their high mightinesses the States of Holland represented by one, who, if my feeble judgment deceive me not, could wield a rapier in their cause, and wag a tongue in their councils — who could fight as well as negotiate."

"In truth, my worthy magistrate, I have borne some blows in their service, and am more familiar with swords than words," said Mynheer Hoogstraaten, with a look that showed no displeasure at the burgomaster's conjecture, at once true and flattering. "But we have now to talk. The season for action is fast coming; and we must first confer and calculate with our friends, as to means and appliances. All the science of your townsman, Simon Stephen*, would be required to compute the chances of the stroke we shall presently have to hazard. Before Holland can move to liberate Flanders, she must learn what Flanders will do towards her freedom. It is from the mouths of the chief men of your cities, your patriot magistrates, your clear-sighted divines, men who will sacrifice party feeling and prejudice, worldly wealth, and sectarian scruples, to forward the great cause of liberty; whose deeds will become the echo of their words, and whose names are the pledges of integrity like some which I am not courtier enough to pronounce in this presence."

There was, notwithstanding, plain evidence in this speech that the speaker knew somewhat of courts as well as camps;

* The inventor of decimal arithmetic about this period.

and that if his trade was to break men's heads, he had also studied what they held inside.

Van Rozenhoed, Van der Gobble, and the prior, all made an involuntary acknowledgment of the compliment. The apprentice, by his immobility, seemed to think he had no title to take a share of it to himself.

"We hope, at least," said the burgomaster, "that Bruges will not be found wanting when the day of trial comes. We are strong in numbers, depend on it, but stronger still in inclination. The stout arms of our artisans will be ready as of old, when they handled their pikes for freedom's sake, and made the name of our town the watchword of valour."

"Bravely spoken, by Saint George! and well you would bear your own part when the day of trial came, I warrant me! Your hand, once more, Mynheer van Rozenhoed. I longed to see you, and judge if fame had been only the pander to wealth; but I am now satisfied you *are* the man the world believes you. But here comes your varlet with the supper. As you trust him, he is, no doubt, trust-worthy. But I prithee let him withdraw when the viands are placed; for I have short time for discourse, and we must be our own servitors, and talk and eat together. The worthy prior will bless our meal and our converse at one and the same time; and you'll find my worthy friend Van der Gobble and myself, though but a couple of heretics, will prove right catholic in respect to all which covers the board."

Van der Gobble looked a hungry confirmation of this voucher, and prepared to give it proof, when a few minutes had sufficed to place the well-covered table which Jans Broeklaer had arranged apart from that at which the foregoing conversation took place. The party was soon in full employment. The burgomaster took his proper station at the head of the table, the Dutch deputy on his right hand, and occupying one side; the prior and Van der Gobble taking their places opposite; and the apprentice the stool at foot, by the side of his master. Thus placed, the business of the board went on; and Hoogstraaten, amply partaking of its cheer, discoursed the while.

"Mynheer van Rozenhoed, and you, reverend prior, the sooner I enter on plain matters of fact the better for us all. My time is short, and yours valuable. My commission to

treat with ye, as the most influential patriots of Bruges, is in the pocket of my doublet here. The ex-burgomaster of Antwerp knows my powers, and has seen me act on them. The capability of this town is great. The reward for its exertion should be proportionate. To you, reverend prior, I am authorised sacredly to promise the bishopric, with its hereditary accompaniment of Chancellor of Flanders, as soon as the city declares itself free from the Spanish dominion." The prior bowed and said, —

"I accept, with gratitude, through such a distinguished source, this solemn confirmation of former offers; the liberty of the country is the great object of my vows, and wholly employs my worldly anxieties, for its accomplishment must be grateful to Heaven. If I may be nominated by the States to fill the episcopal chair, I shall accept the honour with humility, and at the same time with reluctance, convinced of my incompetency," and the prior might here, perhaps, have added some form of protest equivalent to our existing *Nolo Episcopari*, had not the Dutch deputy cut short his discourse.

"Well said, in all points, my reverend father: we understand each other fully. And now for you, my generous host, for that you are so, even to overflowing, I am not now to learn, *we do not* fully understand each other, but we shall soon do so. On your part you will have, as speedily as may be, to prepare for me a strict and not exaggerated list of such burghers of the city and liberties as you can reckon on to aid our purposes. No dubious name must enter into it. All must be sure, and stanch, and ready — for the day of action is at hand. I would not cause you embarrassment, or rather let me speak it plainer, risk, for such there would be had you to sound or tamper with (excuse the word) the dispositions of the doubtful citizens. You will not, therefore, compromise yourself by interference with those of other creeds than your own. His reverence here and you must only deal with the Catholic patriots. For the Calvinists and others of the reformed sects, we do not want assistance. I stand well with some of their chiefs, and can count on them to a man."

"I hope so," said Van Rozenhoed, with an incredulous shake of the head; "but, religious views apart, mynheer, I doubt the purity of many among them. I fear me that our loudest brawlers among the patriot Protestants are only

anxious to follow the example of the arch-traitor Hembyse, at Ghent, and seize on power for their own ends, making reform the cloak for their treachery."

"Like him, then, may such, if they do exist, meet the fate of treachery, and die as traitors ought! but I hope better from the men of Bruges. With the warning before them of a bad example like Hembyse, and a good one like Van Rozenhoed, none will, I trust, be found to play false his country, and prefer infamy to honour."

The burgomaster silently shook his head, and the prior looked his dissent as well; but they both forebore to support the opinion by words, for they could not, in the presence of the two Protestant deputies, speak as they felt against Claas Claassen, and the others to whom Van Rozenhoed had alluded.

Hoogstraaten, after a short pause, continued, "I grieve to see distrust on your brows, my friends, although your tongues, from delicacy no doubt, forbear to urge your scruples further. I am no prophet, and least of all of ill. But Heaven grant that our most righteous cause and our best efforts fail not from party dissensions! If Faction raise her head, adieu to Freedom! Then, indeed, will your weakness be the oppressor's strength. My mind rejects evil boding thoughts, unless they are forced too strongly on me for resistance; but in these sad symptoms of internal mistrust I see a multitude of ills. When, oh when, will Heaven in its bounty grant peace to these distracted countries? Is the wisdom of one portion to be as chaff scattered before the winds in the eyes of the rest? Is blood to flow for ever, and yet not suffice to wash away the stubbornness which men throw before their own enfranchisement? Excuse me, reverend sir, and you, my worthy host: when the heart is in a cause, the tongue will not be tied. I am ready to shed my life-blood for the deliverance of Flanders, as I have long and often risked it to maintain the independence of Holland. But if I see disunion and distrust, like foul weeds, choking the scion of liberty which I am now here for the purpose of planting, I may only offer myself a sacrifice, without obtaining any end."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed the prior; and the apprentice looked as if he were ready to burst with the impatient wish to speak, but durst not.

Van der Gobble never ceased to eat during his Dutch

friend's animated harangue ; and the burgomaster felt at once astonished and abashed at the so evidently heartfelt and so authoritative energy of this stranger's rebuke. But what most surprised him was, the passive air with which the haughty prior yielded the palm to a mere agent from the states, whose name was one unheard of till that moment, — a heretic, as he himself professed, and with no apparent claim to supremacy over those around him, but his high toned zeal and his fearless contempt of danger in so perilous a mission.

" I have said enough, not too much, I trust, on this topic of internal feuds," resumed Hoogstraaten, after a pause, in which he seemed to wait for a reply, but received none. " To your own good sense and to the will of Providence I leave your city dissensions. With those of my own sect, the family of Claassen, for example, I will urge still stronger argument. But now let me hasten to the closing scene of this night's performance, first pledging you all in a flowing cup. Your wine, worthy burgomaster, your wine is of prime flavour. The odious Spaniards at least do some good, as the worst wind blows it to some one or another, in bringing you this choice produce of their vineyards. But a glass of water from the spring-head of Liberty is worth tons of Malaga or Xerea from the stores of a tyrant."

It was evident that the deputy added this last sentiment, to efface the impression of the former one, which his love of good cheer had extorted from him.

" Still," said Van Rozenhoed, with a smile, " we must not reject the wine, mynheer ; on the contrary, fill a bumper, all of us, from this flask of Muscadine. It is as rare a growth, though I say it, as ever was shipped from the quay of Cadiz ; and let us drink to the health of their high mightinesses the States General, with the noble Prince Maurice at their head ; coupled with this assurance, on the faith of a cordial pledge, that Siger van Rozenhoed knows nothing of factious feeling or religious feuds ; that a true son of the Catholic church, he trusts his own soul in its pale, but meddles not with those that are beyond it — acknowledges no distinctions but virtue and patriotism — wishes to all men an equal share in the rights which the state should give to all — and considers that citizen as his dearest friend who does the most to serve his country. This is the best reply I can give to your severe,

but not merited, rebuke, mynheer. But let the reply alone be on record, and that which provoked it be washed out of memory by our wine."

He quaffed off his glass, and the others followed his example. Then Hoogstraaten rose, and with a look still loftier, and an air, if possible, more candid than before, he said, —

"Mynheer van Rozenhoed, on the faith of a true man, and a soldier, I believe your words and honour you for your sentiments. Would to Heaven that all Flemings felt and thought like you! Then liberty and happiness would be to them realities, not shadows; nor their native plains and cities an arena for the prize fighters of Europe. Let us hope and pray for better days, which, I believe, in my heart, ye are about to see. For your kindly pledge to the honour of the States, I thank you in their name; and for that to Prince Maurice, I thank you in — my own."

"How? what? Prince Maurice? In *your own*? Why, what is this? I am utterly bewildered. Father Wolfert — Mynheer van der Gobble — Master Boonen — what does this mean? — Is it possible —"

"That Maurice of Nassau has had the honour of supping with the wealthy and worthy citizen, Siger van Rozenhoed," exclaimed the Dutch deputy, filling up the sentence in his own fashion, and once more stretching forth his hand for the burgomaster's acceptance, while the latter shrunk from its touch. — "It is possible — it is *true*. I am indeed none other — and you will pardon me, and hold guiltless our friends here, if I have reserved to myself the pleasure of making my own introduction in my own way. Do not refuse my hand. You have accepted it, nobly and generously, before now, when offered to you even under the same title."

At these words, the burgomaster, who had looked quite astounded, seemed revived by some electric recollection. He instantly caught the meaning of the prince's allusion; and starting suddenly up, he proceeded, without uttering a word, to open a curiously-carved writing desk, in which he had for years deposited his most important papers. In a minute or two he discovered that for which he sought; and returning towards the table, where his guests all sat watching his movements with no little surprise, he deliberately produced a small scroll, on which was written an obligation for payment of the

sum of fifty thousand florins with interest, to Siger van Rozenhoed, and signed "Maurice of Nassau." This document, after having let his guests peruse it, the burgomaster thrust into the flame of the wax-taper beside him. In a moment it curled up between his finger and thumb, and, catching the blaze, it was blown away by his breath, a black and scarcely tangible remnant of the solid value it had represented but an instant before.

"Thus be the honour purchased—ay, and at too cheap a price, of having entertained at my board the greatest hero of the age, the son of the immortal deliverer of his country, himself the consummator of the glorious work his sire began! The debt is cancelled for ever! But not all the tapers of the earth could burn out the record that will henceforth celebrate my name. I have already considered this day the proudest of my life—but what has been reserved as its crowning distinction! Honour be for ever on the walls so honoured—and may after-ages look upon their crumbling ruins, and say—'This is the spot where Maurice the hero supped with Siger the goldbeater!'"

The first hour that followed this scene was one of lively and animated discussion. The burgomaster, recovered from his surprise, calmed his enthusiasm, and indulged his delight, in listening to the gallant communications of the prince, carried away by his off-hand eloquence into a fervid sympathy with all he said. Plans were sketched for organisation among the various trades, and the several cities of the coalition; and Maurice proved himself, in short, to possess method as well as enterprise, and sagacity as well as courage. The prior took an active part in the conversation. Van der Gobble said little, but ate much; but when he either spoke or ate, his tongue, as well as his teeth, was employed to the purpose. The apprentice acted as secretary with alacrity and precision, taking notes, and marking down memorandums at his employer's dictation, with becoming modesty and in total silence.

When these preliminary measures were pretty well finished, the burgomaster, subsiding gradually into a less political and more personal train of thought, felt at intervals an almost undefinable sensation of pleased anxiety, that the prince might turn his enquiries and observations from public concerns, and speak more of Van Rozenhoed's own. He remem-

bered the sudden light that seemed to flash before his mind, when, in a former conversation, the prior mentioned the probability of Prince Maurice coming to Bruges. But that was in allusion to his entry as a conqueror, at the head of an army. Now he had come, but with all the privacy and risk of an individual actuated by some strong personal motive. Van Rozenhoed was a patriot, and he had most elevated notions of Prince Maurice's character. He believed him capable of any effort or sacrifice for the country's good ; but his general knowledge of mankind gave him a notion that personal interest was the main-spring of human motives ; and *his own*, even at the moment, and unknown to himself, led him to think, or hope, or imagine—he scarcely knew which to call it—that the Stadtholder, high admiral, and generalissimo of Holland, was not in his house that night without some unexplained object relating to its inmates. His surprise, great as it was, was therefore overwhelmed in absolute delight, when the prince rather abruptly turned from the subject of their discussions, and said,—

“ This, gentlemen, is enough. All is now done, that present circumstances permit of our doing. The foundation stone is laid, whereon to build the fabric of your own glory, and this city's greatness. I must now bestir myself for my departure, trusting to your management to pass me safely through the gates. I have no time to dally — I must hasten to co-operate with the patriots of Brabant, and throw myself among those Spanish and Italian mutineers, whose intentions are yet doubtful. I shall not sleep till I confront the garrison of Saint Andrew, and gain them on any terms to our side. With this vital object before me, I must not linger on my way. Let me then briefly say to you, Mynheer van Rozenhoed, that infinite as was the importance of my mission here, assuring myself of the men we had to act with, and the means they could command, I had perhaps postponed my visit, had not a powerful private motive urged me on. That motive,” continued Maurice, (while the burgomaster felt as if his brain danced, and as though his breath was nearly gone,) “ was friendship. I have many whom I believe to be stanch friends—many whom I would serve at any risk ; and among them *one* whom I am now acting for. I am, in short, about to throw my private interest with you into the scale with the great personal and public

merits of a valued and valiant youth, who has this night entered the list of competition with the suitors for your daughter's hand."

The burgomaster's heart, that had felt as if mounting his throat with the velocity of a cannon ball shot up towards the sky, seemed to flop heavily down into his breast again, like the iron globe falling back on the earth. But this operation seemed at once to clear his head. He recovered his sight and breath, and saw things as they were. The visioned possibility of Maurice coming to sue for himself vanished like a meteor flash; and Van Rozenhoed had no doubt but young Arnoul de Grimberghe, the new chamberlain, was the object of his prince's solicitude. Before he could make any reply to what had been offered by the latter, he was struck momentarily dumb again as Maurice continued, —

"In one word, I come to back the suit of Count Ivon de Bassenvelt."

The burgomaster involuntarily started. He looked on the prince, then on the prior and the apprentice. In the faces of the two latter he saw an expression of anxiety that he had no time to analyse. The whole was instantaneous; and the impressions on Van Rozenhoed's mind were hurried and confused. No one seemed to have the power or inclination to aid him. He at length exclaimed, —

"Count Ivon de Bassenvelt!"

"Yes," said Maurice, "the most promising youth of Brabant — the most gallant, the most disinterested of its nobles — the first man to shake off tyranny, and raise the standard of freedom."

"Does your highness know of his late sacrilege?" asked Van Rozenhoed — but faintly, as though the picture of his patriotism had lessened the effect of his offence.

"I know of his risking danger and death to save from a convent's gloom a poor victim of your governor's villany. But I know more than that, mynheer. I know that he adores your daughter, and that he is worthy of her hand, or may I perish if I would blot my scutcheon by the infamy of recommending him to you!"

Van Rozenhoed was evidently moved by the warmth of the prince's manner, and tolerant towards the laxity of his morals. He looked again around him, but no eye met his to aid him

with even the silent support of a glance. He hesitated awhile, and then said, —

“ Prince Maurice, you have touched me on the tenderest point. The happiness of my child weighs with me more than all the world beside. I must be neutral in this question. I have vowed as much. She shall choose for herself; and, honouring your highness as I do, and proud as I am of your interference in this matter, I cannot still say more than that my child shall choose for herself. I firmly believe that nothing can overcome her disgust to the name of De Bassenvelt. An outrage to her pure and powerful sense of delicacy has been done her by the seducer of her convent companion; and I think, and hope, she will never accept a man whom her heart does not approve. If Count Ivon can conquer hers, and overcome her repugnance, *my* consent is here pledged to your highness. I can say no more.”

“ I ask no more, my truly worthy and high minded friend, for such your sentiments make me proud to call you. I answer for Count Ivon. He knows the sex, and I warrant you he will find time and place to establish himself in your daughter's heart. I only trust he may have *fair play*, for he has many difficulties to surmount. Yet tell the fair Theresa from me, and pray let her honour me by accepting this small token of my interest in her happiness, that Maurice of Nassau hopes one day to place her hand in that of his friend Ivon de Bassenvelt, at the altar, where they will be joined for ever by her old confessor, his reverence the prior of St. Andrew, who may be, I trust, ere then, his highness the Bishop of Bruges.”

As Prince Maurice spoke, he took a ruby ring of curious construction from his finger, and handed it to Van Rozenhoed. The prior sat silent, and looked down, quite contrary to his usual wont. The apprentice was keenly watched by Van Rozenhoed, as the prince looked at him and laid a strong emphasis on the words, “ *fair play* ;” and ere his highness had finished speaking, the young man, unwilling, it would seem, to be so scrutinised, rose from the table, and walked across the room.

Little more was said. The prince and his companion Van der Gobble, after a warm leave-taking of his host, were safely conveyed to the Dominican cloister in the prior's boat; and no accident interrupted their departure from the town, the go-

vernor having come to reason on the subject of his proclamation, and the guards consequently offering no obstruction to the movements of travellers duly furnished with papers of egress or ingress, as those in question were.

In a little more, all was dark and silent throughout Rozenhoed House.

CHAPTER IV.

PRINCE MAURICE of Nassau, whom we have just introduced to our readers, in one of those perilous enterprises which his intrepid character made common to him, was, at this period, with the exception of Henry IV. of France, the most distinguished man of his age. A parallel, in proper time and place, might well be drawn between the two heroes; and though the wider and more elevated scene on which Henry acted, and the still greater vicissitudes, and tragical termination of his life, must on the whole give him the precedence in point of interest over Maurice, we may safely say that the epoch in which the latter is now before us presented him to the world in an aspect more exciting than that of his great contemporary at the time. Henry having ran through the evident risks of his eventful career, and having attained the height of power, was sinking in the splendid sunset of success; and had just reached the term when faults of character began to become manifest, which the mid-day light of glory had shrouded rather than revealed. Maurice was in the very prime of life, in the vigour of health and energy, yet not at the summit of his fame. He had triumphed over many obstacles, but he was still circled with dangers and difficulties; and had much to conquer, ere his glorious object — the freedom of his country — was attained. He had been not long before wounded in battle, and had more recently still escaped assassination, that fate which so often sets its bloody seal upon the patriot's sacrifices, as it had done so lately in the case of his great father, and was so soon to do again in that of his glorious friend, between whom and him we would now trace a

likeness though there could exist no rivalry. The faults of Maurice hitherto developed, had been those which the world perhaps too readily excuses, and which individuals, kindly considerate of their own frailty, too easily perhaps forgive. Such faults he shared in common with Henry; and though the amours of the French monarch were distinguished by romance, while those of the Dutch prince partook of phlegm, these were constitutional distinctions; and the want of brilliancy in the adventures of Maurice was amply recompensed by the solid sincerity of his attachments. One, at least, offers a model for that kind of virtue. The severest moralist who has been dazzled by the story of Gabrielle d'Estrées might acknowledge himself edified by that of Gertrude van Mechelen. Without touching on ground too delicate and too foreign from our present purpose, we may state that the constancy of Maurice to this lady, whom he seduced in his youth, and was separated from but by death, if it offer a too common picture of human weakness, gives an unusual lesson of princely fidelity. What higher order of faults, in a political view, ambition might in after-life have given birth to, it is not the purport of these pages to record. We are not writing the life of Prince Maurice, and have only to deal with that brilliant fragment of it (set like a gem in the transactions of our tale) which began at the time now in question, and hurried rapidly on to that period at which our labours are meant to terminate.

Leaving, therefore, the gallant prince to pursue his important journey towards the fort of St. Andrew, in the Isle of Bommel, accompanied by Van der Gobble, young Arnoul de Grimberghe, and a small band of chosen followers, who met him by appointment on the borders of Flanders, we must return awhile to our heroine, and trace the effects produced by a few successive days in her character and prospects in life.

When Theresa, after the final separation of the company, retired to her turret, and recovered in a great measure the composure which the circumstances of the evening had so disturbed, she took a rapid review of all that had occurred. But not content with a mere passing recapitulation of events, such as superficial minds can alone accomplish, she considered each in its connection with the rest, compared their separate effects on each other, as well as their probable consequences to herself, and laboured to form from the whole a combination on

which she might act, as well as reason. The faculty of mind which seemed thus so fully called into being, on this first occasion in her life, has been by modern classifiers christened, we believe, *causality*. We know not if external developements were as evident in those days as in ours; but for the satisfaction of our too scientific readers, we assert, on the authority of an exquisite portrait, preserved by a connoisseur of Bruges, that no disfiguring bumps protruded on the forehead of our lovely, and yet highly intellectual, heroine.

The result of two hours' reflection, such as we have described, was a strong impression on Theresa's mind, that the scene in which she had just played so prominent a part was one degrading, rather than dignified; that her father's ambition had led him from the line of real respectability; and that, in consenting to be the prize of a public exhibition, she had herself paid an unconscious tribute to vanity, at the expense of pride. She felt her cheeks burn as she came to this conclusion; and she intently vowed that the self-inflicted indignity should be atoned for by a long series of self-retribution. She then mentally recalled each person who had so lately figured before her; and by the magic of memory made them act their parts again.

Her different suitors, in look, and mien, and dress, stood up once more for judgment; and when she had well weighed the claims, and as far as she might judge of them, the character of each, she asked herself, "And must I choose from among them, or those insipid cowards, who shrunk back from fear, and dared not urge their suit? They were about ten in all. A fair number for a fair maiden to choose from, no doubt; but methinks that *one* man to suit me, had reckoned more than all these put together. Which of them could I fix on? not one of the cowards, certainly! who then? That brute Trovaldo? That careless coxcomb De Grimberghe? Old Nicholas Zannekin, or the grotesque Van der Gobble? Heaven forbid that any of those should find the chance of favour in my sight! That haughty, but so handsome, baron, with his costly attire, his dissimulating eyes, and sneering smile? — No! He is at least a traitor, let his friend be ever so base. Renault Claassen, young, good looking, modest, and certainly sincere? I do believe he loves me — and he alone. That is a mortifying thought. One only seeks me for myself

—the others, without exception, woo me for my wealth, or at best are caught by what they are pleased to consider my beauty. But this Claassen, he unquestionably loves me ; and is not true affection worth all the rest? No — not if allied with mean birth and low connection ! A tanner's son ! my mother's blood rises again to my brow, at the thought of these affronts. Besides, I know nothing of this youth, whose admiration has made me so forget myself. And is there not a meanness in his way of approaching me — a want of spirit that excites my pity, rather than my sympathy? I believe I am woman enough to like a humble lover, but not a cringing one. A man should not fawn like a dog. Madame Marguerite's *Fanchon* has positively more spirit than this young tanner ! No, no, I must not think of him. How different was the bearing of Master Lambert Boonen, when he spoke to me in the bower? What a superior tone and manner, in spite of his plain and unbecoming dress. I wonder does *he* love me !”

This last thought was quite electrical. The others had been more or less tame and reflective ; this came like a lightning flash. Theresa, who had been seated during her soliloquy on her bedside, started up involuntarily, and looked full at her glass. She covered her face with her hands, seeing it suffused with a deep blush ; and, scarcely knowing what she did, she threw open her little casement, and put her head out into the refreshing air. The night was dark. The lamps of the illumination had all expired ; and as far as Theresa could distinguish, she saw nothing but gloomy masses of buildings, and the tall poplars of the Duyver, standing blackly up along the side of the canal. The casement she looked from did not permit a view of the corresponding part of Rozenhoed House, called the Apprentice's Turret ; but as Theresa's glances fell upon the basin, she clearly saw the reflection of a lamp, quivering like a living thing of light in the dark water, and she knew it could only come from the window of Lambert Boonen's apartment. She fixed her eyes on this light, as though there were a kind of fascination in it ; and quite unconsciously to her, her thoughts seemed to make it a medium of communication with the place whence it emanated. Theresa's soliloquy was thus resumed : —

“ Can the youth be still awake and up? How studious he

must be, and how musical he is! — what a delicious voice! — either in singing or speaking, it really seems to come from his very heart” — (and here she placed her hand on *hers*, and sighed,) — “there is certainly an odd and striking sort of gracefulness about him, that one would be amused at, but for the air of deep feeling mixed with it. What energy in his words to-night — in his manner more than his words; and how proudly respectful he looked when I left the bower so abruptly. It was just there, where the light now glimmers, that the boat stood so still a few nights back, when those sweet strains rose up. It must have been his voice — I should distinguish it in a thousand. He does not sing to-night — yet he might see my light, as easily as I see his! How strange that my father and his uncle should forbid his speaking or looking at me. Yet how bold of him to speak to me in spite of their commands — and he did not seem in the least afraid of me. What can he be doing now? I wonder if he is thinking of *me* — I will just look from Nona’s window over at his turret.”

This string of reflections was run over as rapidly, and with about as little consciousness of what they tended to, as a string of beads counted by some superannuated devotee; and Theresa’s last thought, above recorded, was followed by an instant movement from her own bedroom up the half dozen steps that separated it from the still smaller chamber occupied by her attendant.

Nona, fatigued by the day’s bustle, and tired of waiting for her mistress’s call, had sunk on her bed, “accoutred as she was,” and fallen asleep. Theresa was unwilling to disturb her. Perhaps she did not wish (if she thought of it at all) for a witness to her present proceeding; but Nona’s bed being placed directly under the small square casement, she found it necessary to step up on it, and across the body of its occupant, to enable her to look out as she intended. There was little fear of her active tread disturbing her handmaid’s slumbers, so she placed her foot gently up, and stepped over. Then cautiously opening the lattice, she looked out; but was almost as much terrified as if a ghost had met her view, on seeing the apprentice’s face looking from his window full upon hers, and seeming almost close to it, as the light in his cham-

ber produced the illusion of throwing it out into the intervening gloom.

The apprentice and Theresa started in mutual surprise, but his was that of pleasure, hers that of confusion.

He seemed impelled forward — she drew back — and, in this involuntary motion, her foot, delicate as it was, caused Nona to repulse its pressure with a sudden jerk of her whole body, such as an imperfect sleeper gives, on even a slighter interruption. Theresa was half frightened, half ashamed ; she dared not move, lest Nona might awake, and catch her in the fact, such as it was. She could not withdraw her head from the window, without knocking it against the wall that imprisoned it, at the only side which allowed of escape ; and while she thus stood, feeling her colour come and go in rapid succession, she saw the apprentice acknowledging her presence, by frequent and profound obeisances, having drawn back his head from the window, seemingly to allow of his more freely placing his hand on his breast, which he did, as it appeared to Theresa, with infinite grace : though her eyes began to swim, as tears, she could not tell from what source, came rushing into them. She was greatly distressed, and her embarrassment became heightened beyond endurance. She plainly distinguished the face of another person start up beside that of the apprentice, and look forward as if to see the object of his attentions. She could bear no more, but turning suddenly round, she sprang across Nona, and on the floor, and quickly darted to her own room, and threw herself on her face on the bed, every limb trembling and her heart throbbing against the pillow, which she pressed almost convulsively.

This little adventure occupied but a very few minutes. Somewhat more were required to allow of Theresa's recovering from its effects : and when she did shake off her emotion, and looked bright and clear again, like some beautiful bird shaking the night showers from its wings, she appeared to herself to have gained new strength from the trial she had by mere thoughtlessness so exposed herself to. She seemed to have read a self-taught lesson ; and in these proofs of our heroine's judgment, we wish to mark how closely its exercise was connected with, and excited by, the natural errors of a youthful mind. She felt her present distress to be a just penance for

her vanity and curiosity ; nor was she reconciled to the consciousness of having indulged these failings, by reflecting that they were attributed (how unjustly she knew not) exclusively to her sex. She continued to think on, in this reverie of self-reproach, unmindful of clocks and carillons ; and it was some time after midnight, when she suddenly recollected her having left the casement open, directly over the bed of the sleeping Nona, and the fresh reproach which the recollection conveyed, made her promptly hasten to repair her error.

On reaching the little chamber, she found Nona still asleep ; and on the instant, an irresistible spell seemed to urge her to look once more from the window, in spite of the embarrassment and mortification she had been enduring. Without pausing to analyse or combat these feelings, she took the lamp from the table, and placed it outside the door, so that the chamber was left totally dark ; and then, safe from discovery, she softly stepped again on Nona's bed, and put her head towards the open lattice, as cautiously as though she feared some gaping monster watched to devour it outside. Her first glance was sent straight forward, and she saw the black square of the apprentice's window unoccupied and unilluminated. A throb, that felt very like disappointment (but that she could not believe it to be), seemed to move within her bosom. Emboldened by her security, she turned her eye in other directions, and at length they fell upon the window of her father's private parlour. To her great astonishment, light came streaming through the bars of the imperfectly constructed lattice work, which served in those days for shutters, where such an improvement was adopted on the unguarded state of windows in the generality of houses. She stretched forward, and thought she heard the murmur of voices. Quick of apprehension, and sensitive to emotions, let them rise from what source they might, a vague sentiment of fear shot across Theresa's brain.

The scenes of the evening, the political excitement introduced among the company, the governor's violence, the bustling air of her father and the other magistrates, his having hurried her to her apartment, all rushed before her mind ; and joining all with the circumstance of the strange apprentice having another man concealed in his turret, and the lights and sounds proceeding at that late hour from her father's

private room, she formed an ingenious (and, as our readers already know, an unreal) combination of alarm for Van Rozenhoed's safety.

Before the anxious daughter could enter into any examination of her feelings, or rightly comprehend them, she had descended the stairs of her turret, and reached a little corridor which connected it with the main body of the building. Beside the door at the foot of the staircase, one opened from this corridor, on the left hand, into the great hall, and another, on the right, led directly into the private room before mentioned, and where Van Rozenhoed, Prince Maurice, and the others, were at that time assembled.

Theresa softly undid the inside fastening of the door that admitted her into the corridor, and she stood for an instant on the lower step of the stairs, holding the unwieldy iron handle, but afraid to advance, as the sound of a strange voice struck on her ear, coming direct from her father's room. Without any premeditated plan, she was on the point of stepping into the corridor, but a preliminary glance before her, showed an object that arrested her still more than her previous nervous incertitude.

This was Jans Broeklaer, placed on one knee, with his eye to the key-hole of the secret parlour; one hand helping to support his unsteady position, and the other held up to his head in a hollowed form, giving every possible facility to the words spoken in the room, as they performed their aerial passage into the cavities of his ear.

Theresa was somewhat shocked at this. She knew from her cradle up that Jans Broeklaer was a favourite and trusted servant in Rozenhoed House; but she was not aware of the secret privileges assumed, in all ages and countries, by domestics ycleped confidential. She had formed no direct design of listening herself; and if she had, it is probable this evident example of the act would have forcibly appealed against such an intention. We are often made sensible of the unworthiness of our own thoughts, by seeing them reduced to practice in the persons of others. Such was the case in the present instance; and Theresa felt a blush on her cheek, not less on her own account than that of the culprit before her.

Her first impulse was to retreat from what seemed a participation in his meanness. The next was to rush forward and

apprise her father of it. But both were prevented, by the audible discourse, which, beyond all doubt, had reference to her. It was precisely at the period of Prince Maurice's recommendation in favour of his friend, but before he named him, that Theresa began to distinguish what he said; and before she could exert resolution to retire or move forward, she heard his explicit avowal that the subject of his interference was Count Ivon de Bassenvelt.

The very mention of that name carried a shock with it. Her aversion rose up in full force; and wounded pride (for now it was so) added strength to her repugnance. To be thus made the mark of interference for strangers, she knew not whom, excited her indignation to the utmost. Her father's reply to the overtures she heard afforded her little satisfaction. It was clear that a new influence had succeeded in gaining possession of him. She was only alive to the feeling that she was made an object of barter and trade; and even if she had data on which to judge the motives of the parties concerned, hers was not a mood in which she could examine them. The whole force of her character was excited, and every high, and even haughty sentiment, seemed called into full play. More voices than two mixed in the conversation that followed her father's speech; but it decreased into imperfect murmurs as other objects were touched on.

Theresa had heard enough; but even if she had not, she was obliged rapidly to retire up the turret stairs, for fear of being herself discovered in the same offence, and by the very offender whose conduct she had so recently condemned: for Jans Broeklaer suddenly sprang upon his feet, and with long and gliding strides gained the further end of the corridor. He had seen through the key-hole the apprentice rise from his seat to conceal his emotion, be it what it might, when Prince Maurice, with strong emphasis, pronounced the words "fair play;" and, like a practised listener, he fled, with cautious rapidity, from the chance of detection.

Theresa did not sleep that night. If she from time to time closed her eyes, it was from the instinctive impulse of deep thought, which prompts the movement of the open hand across the brow, more securely shutting the lids that might let in a gleam of material light to disturb its intensity. Reflection thus secured had uninterrupted force. Theresa saw, in the

inward mirror of the mind, the truth of her position on this first trial of the world. She shuddered as she gazed on it, with disgust rather than dread, for she possessed a powerful and fearless spirit. She saw before her a perilous and awful career. She knew not its extent, but she could imagine its danger. She balanced the evidence of what one night had shown of worldly agitation, with the testimony of all her previous life as to religious seclusion; and for an instant her heart was filled with the feeling that she ought to renounce the first, and fly back to the deep obscurity of its contrast. But this was the feeling of an instant—no more. The ambitious stirring of her character burst from its control. She felt that it would be mean and cowardly to fly from danger into what was little better than despair or death. The proud advantages of worldly distinction sprang out before her imagination, in all the emblazonment of youthful hope. She felt all her triumphant anticipations revive; and her heart swelled with the consciousness of its own strength, while it seemed to melt with tenderness, in the conviction that it was not selfishness that throbbed within it.

“One friend!” exclaimed Theresa, “one faithful friend in whom to repose my confidence, with whom to share my joy—I ask no more, and life has no trial which I will not dare. Oh! that I could but find such a treasure! The world is wide—nature is boundless—is there not such in existence? May not one congenial heart expand, and throb, and melt away in its own tenderness, as mine does now, waiting some electric touch of sympathy to blend itself with mine? Can feelings like those that move me with such magic power be given for mine own torment? Can the heart be filled with wants like mine, but that they may corrode and consume it? Oh, no, no! something tells me, stronger than mortal wisdom, that life was meant for happiness, and human feelings granted us for indulgence and delight. Away then, at once, and for ever, with the degrading thought of living buried in a convent walls: rather let me look out on this new world of brilliancy and splendour into which I am entering. Let my own energies support me while I am alone, and let my whole heart be ready to meet and join with that other, which (as nature and reason unite in telling me) now pants with the same exquisite anxiety as my own!”

CHAPTER V.

THE bell which summoned the family of Rozenhoed House, and told the neighbourhood that the chief burgomaster was about to breakfast every morning at eight o'clock, warned Theresa, on that following the night which we have described, not that it was time to spring from her bed, or hasten on her dress, but to give over her attention to the refreshment of her favourite plants and budding flowers, and hasten to partake of some for herself. She had been from almost day-break employed in her garden and green-house; and had, in the fragrant companionship of nature, and the bracing influence of a spring morning, recovered from the effects of a sleepless night. Her feelings and her features regained their wonted composure; and she entered the breakfast-room in the dazzling glow of health and beauty, and with a renovated tone of dignity pervading both her mind and body.

Madame Marguerite's usual indolence had made her invariably the last of the trio assembled on every preceding morning at table, and Van Rozenhoed had regularly waited until a message from his daughter informed him that his ragout, or pastry, or roasted capon, with his warm tankard of Malmsey, smoked on the board; for not even in his luxurious mansion had coffee yet found its place, though it was just then introduced into France from Turkey, by Thevenot the traveller, and was pronounced by Bacon to be "a drink that comforteth the brain and heart, and helpeth digestion;" and it was half a century later ere Pasqua, the Greek, first set up a coffee-house, and introduced its use in England.

Theresa, whom we may acknowledge, without disparagement to her delicacy, to have eaten and drank in the fashion and taste of her times, was used to partake with good appetite of the matin repast, composed as it ordinarily was of materials that remind one of the oft-cited allowance of Queen Elizabeth's maids of honour, or of that stated in an old record of her reign—"For my lorde and my ladye, half a chyne of mutton or ells a chyne of beefe boiled, and a chikyng, with certaine quarts of beer and wine." On the present occasion her early occupations in the breezy morn had encouraged the natural

tendencies of youth and health, which over refinement had not then pronounced inelegant, and she would not have been ashamed to acknowledge to any one (what a modern fine lady would be shocked to admit even to herself), that the savoury odours wafted from the well covered table as she entered the room penetrated to her palate with a most exhilarating effect. She thought she was, as usual, the first of the family ; and she turned her head to give orders that her father might be summoned, when she was doomed to meet a renewal of the previous night's surprise, on seeing him busily occupied at a side-table, folding up and sealing several packets of papers, with Master Lambert Boonen, his apprentice.

We cannot afford time, at this stage of our story, to enter minutely into all the little changes of feeling which, almost every hour, showed our heroine's character in a new aspect to herself. We hope that enough has been told to convey a notion of what that character was in its main features, and we trust that our readers will sympathise sufficiently with it, to imagine its variations and affections on occasions such as the present. All Theresa's self-respect, the true source of dignity in thought and look, rose up to protect her from any unguarded betrayal of feelings less lofty ; while the air of intense yet unpresuming admiration which glowed in the apprentice's looks instantly checked any taint of haughtiness which she might have been disposed to throw into hers. As it was, neither could have appeared to the other in an aspect more effective than those they severally wore ; and the first glance of recognition, and the impressive silence of the reciprocal salutation, imperceptibly advanced them deep into each other's favour. Memory does not retrace more rapidly the lapse of years gone by, than does love traverse the space between acquaintanceship and intimacy. This young couple had but just met — had scarcely exchanged words or thoughts — had had little or no communication of feelings — yet almost at once, and certainly unconsciously to one of the parties, a communion of hearts, a longing after confidence, an involuntary interest in each other, did exist already. Love, even now, had certainly stepped between them, not like a link in a common chain, that separates while it connects two others, but as a flower blending on the same stalk with its fellows, in an essence of unity and odour. Such was the present effect of the

one undefinable passion, so resistless in its approach, so anomalous in its effects, so exhaustless in description. What were the results of its present appearance the sequel of our tale will tell. For the present it is enough to state, that Theresa had not the least suspicion of the source of her own sensations; nor did she know the motive of the instinctive delicacy which makes young minds like hers shrink from the first approach of feelings, which the great principle of nature teaches them to invoke and sigh for.

Theresa saw plainly that neither her father nor the apprentice had, more than herself, enjoyed the least repose. The former was still clad in the splendid decorations of his fête-dress; while the latter (a striking contrast to his master) wore the simple black suit, unslashed and undecorated, with the plain woollen hose in which he had appeared the previous night. Van Rozenhoed's looks betrayed anxiety, while those of the apprentice were animated and glowing. Matters of moment were evidently in the minds of each, and affecting them in the different ways by which the same causes act on youth and age.

As Theresa marked their appearance, Madame Marguerite entered the room, accompanied by Fanchon, both moving forward in that corresponding gait which might not irreverently be called a waddle. The calmly benevolent countenance of the dame seemed little affected by the scenes which had so agitated the rest of the household; while the lapdog looked as sleekly irascible as though neither coaxing nor combing could change the current of his temper.

"Good morning, my child! Good morning, Madame Marguerite," said the burgomaster to the ladies, as they severally entered; and after a short pause, in which he and his apprentice seemed to complete their task, he took his place at table. The apprentice followed his example, so far as Theresa had in a similar way followed that of her kinswoman. But there the respective imitations ended. For while Van Rozenhoed and Madame Marguerite attacked the viands before them with irresistible vehemence, their young companions seemed suddenly to have lost all inclination or all power of eating. Nor did they seem more disposed to fill up the intervals which the occupation of their elders left in the conversation. The latter were for some time too busily engaged to concern them-

selves with what the others were doing. But at length, as Van Rozenhoed raised his eyes to accompany, by a glance, the demand he was about to make for some fresh supply, he observed his daughter, with hands unemployed and eyes cast down, while the apprentice, who sat opposite, was occupied in sticking the point of his huge two-pronged iron fork into the embroidered table-cloth, at the same time that his looks seemed striving to pierce the lids of the downcast eyes before him.

"Why, how now, Theresa!—what ails thee, child?" exclaimed the burgomaster: "can the events of last night so weigh upon thy spirits? And Master Boonen, can you not find better employment for your fork than picking the bones of the birds and fishes in the damask drapet, while so much more substantial occupation courts its prongs among the dishes? Eat, maiden, eat!—and you, young master, let not your modesty require further invitation. Do honour to our repast, which, in sooth, does honour to the housewifery of our respected kinswoman here, Madame Marguerite de Lovenskerke. Ah! had our late worthy guest, Cornelis van der Gobble, but tarried for breakfast, he would have tried and judged every dish without pressing! Come, Lambert, pass me that platter of stewed kidneys, first serving yourself. The champagne and spices of the sauce tempt me exceedingly!"

"Dear child," said Madame Marguerite, taking up the cue, and addressing Theresa, "help thyself to something, or ask this young gentleman to help thee in this dilemma of thine; for verily thou hast lost thy appetite, and that never happens without good cause. What is it, love, that changes thee so? On other days this abstinence is not thy wont. It was but yesternorn thou didst twice eat of pigeon pasty, and as often of yon collared wild boar's head that now stands before thee untouched. Jans Broeklaer, good fellow, serve me to a goblet of sugared beer, and stir the raisins at bottom of the tankard. Theresa, child, 't were pity to let that larded sweetbread go from the board dishonoured: prithee give me half on't, and let thy pretty mouth do justice to the rest."

As she drank off the foaming goblet, while Theresa helped her largely to her favourite morning dish, she renewed her well-intended banterings, unconscious how much they went home to her fair cousin's conscience. "In troth, now, thou *must* eat, Theresa; there can be no just cause for this, I trow.

Thou hast not passed the night in cogitating on the number and nature of thy motley lovers, nor in gazing from thy casement to count the stars, or list a serenade? Nay, blush not, nor look so grave; these things have been done ere now, my dear. Often have I passed such nights, alas! — Jans Broeklaer, let me again taste of thy tankard.—Thou dost well, Theresa, to try those pickled trout: thy youthful organs can well endure what such as mine may not brook.—Ah! Mynheer Rozenhoed, my good cousin, what troublous times are these! —turmoil and broil for ever in this poor town of ours! When or how will all this end?"

"Madame Marguerite," said the considerate burgomaster, raising from the table a curiously and richly gilt flask, and pouring a supply of its cordial contents into a long-shanked glass, "here, let me offer you a balm against sore thoughts and sad forebodings. This choicest Rosa Solis—you know its flavour—can best answer your questions, by making you forget their cause. Better days, kind kinswoman, for us and ours!"

While the magistrate quaffed, and the dame but sipped, the cordial, Theresa and the apprentice went through the semblance of sharing in the repast, and in a mutual but unacknowledged desire to avoid observation, they exchanged a few casual and common-place remarks. Had the elders of the party been less engaged, the younger ones had been more embarrassed, if we can at all use that term in relation to the apprentice, who had too much presence of mind to run any risk of self-betrayal.

At length, Van Rozenhoed having gone through the rapid, and, as it after all appeared, the mechanical, evolutions of the meal, he rose somewhat abruptly from his seat, and turning his looks alternately from Madame Marguerite to Theresa, he said,—

"Now, my kind kinswoman, and my dear child, having given full time for your repast, which I would not wish to spoil by a too sudden surprise, I have to prepare ye for a prompt and a somewhat long journey. I set out at noon for Brussels."

"For Brussels!" echoed the ladies.

"Ay, and methinks 't were well I did not go alone. What say you, Madame Marguerite, and you, Theresa? Would

you prefer to stay behind in the kind keeping of the governor, or trust yourselves with me, and bear me company?"

"The governor!" exclaimed the dame, with a scream, which Fanchon shrilly echoed, quitting for a moment his plate of savoury titbits, and shaking away his curls so as to show his sunk and bleared eyes, as they fixed on his mistress. "Oh, Mynheer van Rozenhoed! oh, cousin, how could you risk the shaking of my nerves by the mention of that monster? We will all go with you—myself, Theresa, Fanchon—all!"

Theresa's only reply to her father's query was a rapid movement towards his open arms, as if she sought shelter from the very supposition of being left behind.

"I thought so," exclaimed he, pressing his daughter to his breast, and smiling cheerily on Madame Marguerite. "No, no, do not upbraid me; I never dreamt of leaving either of you in the reach of that ruffian governor's tyranny! All is arranged for our departure, save your women's preparations. Hasten, then, both of ye: furnish your coffers and caskets with as scant a garniture as may suffice for three days' residence in the archducal capital. To that must my stay be limited."

"But, cousin, what does this quick resolve and this great speed denote? Will you not trust us women with the cause?"

"In good time, yes, sweet kinswoman. Ask not now. It all arises from the doings of last night. Let that suffice. Great consequences hang on the issue of this journey; nor must it be delayed, even for the trimming of a lady's coif!"

A good-humoured smile accompanied these words, and he waved his hand to hasten Madame Marguerite's preparations. She took the hint, and left the room, accompanied by her four-footed favourite, happily unconscious of the fate to which it was doomed in the issue of this momentous expedition.

No sooner had the door closed, than Van Rozenhoed, having whispered some directions to the apprentice, who immediately returned to his former occupation, addressed himself in a tender and emphatic tone to Theresa, still holding her close to him as he spoke.

"Yes, my child, you shall accompany me on this journey, nor ever quit my protection, until I can place you in that of him whom your own heart shall choose to guard and cherish you for life. The scene of last night must have told you the

state of public and private feeling, here and all through the land. The whole country is on the eve of a great struggle, and the shock must reach us all. Heaven only knows who may be spared ; and as it may be my lot to fall, Theresa, it behoveth us both to dally not in making a fitting choice of one who may fill thy father's place with even stronger, but Heaven knows he cannot, be he whom he may, have fonder, claims to thy duty and love ! ”

A closer pressure from Theresa's arm, which encircled her father's neck, was the only answer to this address.

“ And thou must choose, my child,” continued he, “ ere events may come to leave thee no power of choice. Young as thou art, I would not hurry thee, Heaven witness for me, from any motive of parental pride, were not thy safety itself at stake. But I am even now, and I take my full measure of reproach in the confession, I am even now afraid I have myself perilled thy safety in making thee the mark of enmity. Thou canst choose but one among thy suitors, and all the rest must hate that one ; ay, and perhaps even thee, my sweet and innocent child. But it is now too late — the step is not to be retraced, even though it be a false one. Let us then do our best to repair it. Thou understandest me, Theresa. Hast thou yet given thy thoughts to this subject ? ”

As Van Rozenhoed turned to seek a reply to these questions, he saw that his velvet doublet and its gold embroidery glistened in the trickling tears that flowed profusely from his daughter's eyes, as she leant her head upon his shoulder. From the moment that he had mentioned the chances of his own death she had wept incessantly, and had scarcely heard what followed. This quiet proof of tenderness went to the father's heart. He pressed her still closer to him, and with warm caresses told how he felt for her and with her.

During this scene the apprentice seemed absorbed in his employment. Van Rozenhoed had spoken in an under tone, but not as if inclined to keep his conversation secret. In what followed he raised his voice, and evidently meant it to make a double impression, on Theresa and the apprentice both.

“ The time is at hand for decision on this main point of your happiness and mine, Theresa. Thou knowest I will not seek to warp thy choice. None shall arbitrate thy destinies but thyself. The only conditions to my consent are, that he

whom thou mayest fix on must be a Belgian, nobly born, a patriot, and have served the country's cause. Thou art the representative of noble blood — and methinks thou hast other claims to mate thee with the proudest of the land. In the perhaps too widely opened lists of yesternight, I admitted all comers — and *one*, at least, who ought not to have entered there. But my kindly feelings towards the youth, and my confidence in thee, Theresa, overcame my pride, and I hope I may not add, my prudence ; for I trust, let appearances be what they may, that thou holdest in proper scorn the overtures of a low-born churl, the son of thy father's foe."

" On that point, my dear father, be assured," replied Theresa, recovering from her emotion, as pride swept its gusty breath across her heart, and dried up the moisture which had flowed from affection, " no one of birth inferior to my own shall sully the blood of two old and noble names."

Renault Claassen alone was in her mind's eye, while she uttered this, and unconsciously drew up every nerve of her elastic form into increased height and tension. But as the words escaped her lips, an impulse equally involuntary turned her looks on the apprentice ; and the blood rushed back from her cheeks, at the dread of having caused him pain. But she saw his speaking eye fixed full upon her, with an expression that, as she read it, was rather of triumph than humility, as if his mind retorted back the haughty sentiment with the honest scorn of insulted worth. She cared not to bear the scrutinising gaze, but gave her looks and her attention again to her father, who continued, with a tone that savoured of exultation rather than of tenderness, —

" Spoken like the child of your dear mother ! So would her spirit have prompted her to think and act. And now that I am satisfied on the vital point, and that the views of no inferior can dare, with a hope of success, be lifted towards thee, I feel bound at once to mention (with no wish to even lead thee to a choice, for thou shalt be entirely free,) that a strong recommendation has been urged to me in favour of one of your suitors."

" I know it, my father ; I know and have heard it all ; and much do I grieve that you for one moment listened, be it spoken by whom it might, to the utterance of a name, which you must hold me all unworthy did I not abhor. Never, so

help me Heaven! shall the vile seducer of my friend be my husband. Never will I consent to see his face or listen to his speech. High birth, and patriotism even, no, not my country's deliverance, dear as you have taught me to prize that glorious object, will make me wed the wanton violator of religion and virtue."

With these words, she fervidly kissed the diamond cross which hung by a chain of gold round her neck; and, as if her present speech were meant as an atonement for the former, she again threw a hasty glance at the apprentice, and she now read in his looks all that was congenial to her own feelings — an impassioned air of admiration, softened by an expression she could not thoroughly examine nor attempt to define. She then, in brief and candid terms, explained to her father the circumstance of her having overheard a part of the previous night's conversation; but she omitted any statement of her discovery from Nona's window of the stranger in the apprentice's turret; rather leaving her motives to be attributed to a mixture of groundless fear with curiosity, than venture on an explanation of the true cause of her descending to the corridor. In return for her avowal, Van Rozenhoed acknowledged to her that the stranger, whose voice she heard, and whose interference she so deprecated, was no other than Prince Maurice of Nassau; and that it was through his recommendation that Count Ivon de Bassenvelt put forth his pretensions to her hand; and he at the same moment presented her the ruby ring, and repeated the prince's message.

Theresa felt every nerve tingle with astonishment at this mention of the prince's name; and we must, as faithful chroniclers, avow that a flush of pleasure warmed her frame. The distinction of being wooed, although but for another, by the first hero of the age, the pride of wearing a ring the gift of such a man, the honour of an alliance with his chosen friend, combined for a while to shake the foundations of all her former feelings; and her first impulse was a wish to recall the oath that yet quivered on her lips. In that burst of surprised delight, De Bassenvelt no more appeared a culprit. His offences were forgotten; and had he at the moment, in all the daring energy of his character, but flung himself at her feet, he had probably been raised at once, by her hand and to its possession, and Ambition have gained what Love alone was worthy of ob-

taining. She paused for a moment; and, without venturing to look towards the apprentice, or even at her father, she said, in an accent that savoured but little of her usually decided, though by no means peremptory, tone,—

“But you, my father, notwithstanding this distinguished patronage, in spite of the public services, the rank, the accomplishments of this Count Ivon, you surely will reject his suit, nor admit such outrage to your own feelings as its very consideration implies?”

Van Rozenhoed, though sometimes unconscious of the secret springs which moved his own opinions, was shrewd enough as to those of others; and he thought he could see that Theresa was not insensible to the motives which influenced him on this question. He therefore replied, —

“On this point you know, my child, I leave you wholly free. I would not interfere with thee in word or thought; but I would suggest to thee to be not rash where thy whole happiness demands caution. Take counsel of thy head as well as of thy heart, Theresa; and let time be the arbitrator of any difference that may arise between them. We must now speed our preparations for this journey. On the road to Brussels there will be ample opportunity for reflection and consultation both.”

The effect of this answer was again in opposition to the speaker's wish. Theresa, thrown back, as it were, upon herself, felt shocked at the weakness which she now acknowledged. Another of those prompt transitions of which we have shown her to be susceptible brought her mind to its proper poise; and every former feeling rose strong again in her heart. She saw that her father's views were, beyond doubt, in favour of the prince's friend. She felt that her own were liable to be warped by the influence that guided his. A secret impulse, which she would not trust herself to enquire into, repelled the suggestions which it told her were unworthy; and thus, willing to act up to her sense of right, and avoid all bias towards wrong, she still felt that she wavered, and that the counsel of a clearer head and cooler heart could alone be able to decide her. Her thoughts instantly rested on her old confessor, the prior; and yet with a shrinking she knew not why, as if he was not the sort of friend she longed for, she resolved to proceed immediately to the Dominican cloister, to bid him adieu, and at the

same time to throw herself on his advice as to her uncertain and perilous position.

She was spared the avowal of part of these motives, which might lead to conjectures as to the rest, by her father suggesting the propriety of her saying farewell to her spiritual friend, and asking his blessing on her journey. As she was about to quit the room, to give orders to Nona and set out for her visit to the cloister, Van Rozenhoed added, "With the prayers of his reverence for our well-doing, and with a righteous duty boldly to be performed, I augur nought but domestic and public good as the results of this journey. We are all embarked in a common cause. Thou and myself, Theresa, as well as our good cousin and this young friend, who though so lately known to, is deeply prized by me, and has, in the double right of his uncle and thy father, strong claims on thy good will. Thou seest that I confide in him amply. I am not a man to do things by halves; nor must thou withhold the full measure of thy regard from our fellow-traveller. Master Boonen takes the fourth place in my carriage to Brussels."

"Does he, indeed!" exclaimed Theresa—an exclamation which, if freely translated from the vulgar tongue into the language of the heart, would have meant, "how delighted I am!" Whether the apprentice so received it, or how he read the graceful inclination of Theresa's flexible form, and the gracious smile on her as flexible features, we are not prepared to say. The only visible effect produced on him was a bow of respectful gravity, apparently as much addressed to the parent as the child.

Van Rozenhoed was perfectly satisfied with himself throughout this whole scene, as all people who are agreeably self-deceived. Professing perfect neutrality in the great question at stake, he as much as possible had biassed Theresa towards his own object. Disclaiming all authority as to her choice of a husband, he had actually prohibited one candidate, and insisted on qualifications which could be united in very few. And finally he had, by his unconsciousness of danger from one so unpretending and apparently unattractive as the apprentice, positively thrown his daughter into the very danger from which he had formerly shrunk; and while fancying he acted from free will, had become entangled in the snare he had made for himself and her.

But if her father was pleased with the aspect of things, Theresa was at least contented ; while the apprentice, had we time to spare for a minute description of his feelings, would clearly appear to be the most satisfied of the party.

CHAPTER VI.

THERESA was soon in the cell of the prior of Saint Andrew's, having made the few minutes' passage from Rozenhoed House to the Dominican cloister in her father's covered barge, which differed from a Venetian gondola but in being gaily trimmed and painted, with an image at the prow, and a banner at the stern, and two richly attired boatmen guiding it with gilt-headed poles through the simple navigation of the canal. The prior received her at the door of his cell, as in the parlance of the cloister it was still called, for it was the same in which we first introduced Father Wolfert to our readers, full twenty years ago. But it was now so changed from its old aspect that even the burgomaster, its former frequent visitant as plain Siger Roozen, could scarcely, in his few and far between visits since he became Mynheer van Rozenhoed, recognise it for the same.

Theresa sat on a velvet-covered stool, beside the down-cushioned arm-chair of his reverence the prior : their feet reposed on a luxurious carpet ; and their eyes rested on all sides on splendid tapestry, representing some of the most voluptuous scenes recorded in Holy Writ. Susannah and the Elders, Potiphar's wife, Bathsheba in the bath, and Ruth " among the alien corn," occupied the once bare walls, and spoke to the imagination the language of passion, in its various degrees from sensuality to love. In the spaces between, pictures, by master hands, of female saints in various exciting attitudes of devotion marked the prior's taste, in subject as well as execution ; and the few other articles of use or ornament in the room proved that its master was not repulsively ascetic, even in his most private retreat.

" 'Tis well, 'tis very well, fair daughter," said the prior, as Theresa informed him of the approaching departure for

Brussels. "Thou hast my blessing with thee—and the rest as well. Ye are all alike my children—although one claims kindred nearer than that of spiritual parentage. Lambert Boonen has my especial prayers on this enterprise, which abounds in perils to him, more than thou yet mayest know, Theresa. But gratitude to his patron commands this duty; and I hope much from his zealous attention to thy father's interests and his own, which my good old friend declared last night were firmly joined together."

"Did my father say as much, reverend sir?" asked Theresa, timidly, yet resolved to be assured.

"He did, my child, when your and Lambert's night lamps glimmered together on the basin's surface. It was a casual but curious junction, and ominous, please Heaven! of bright hours and a pure flame—of friendship, my sweet child—only of *friendship*, mind ye, Theresa. Thou must not let a warmer thought enter thy fair bosom, but for him of thy father's choosing."

"Holy father, no other thought has risen in my breast for mortal man," exclaimed Theresa, half frightened at the cautioning, yet she thought sinister, expression of the prior's tone and look.

"Art thou sure, my daughter?" asked he, taking her hand in his, and looking still more enquiringly and ambiguously in her face.

"I am—indeed I am," uttered she, her heart beating quickly, from fear that she might have mistaken her own feelings, and that she was unconsciously telling an untruth.

"Consider a moment, Theresa! Is there no youth of modest mien, that ill conceals an ardent spirit, whose looks have spoken to your heart, and found an answer there;—with whom you have exchanged thoughts, ay, and, it may be, sighs;—whose birth and pretensions are humble, but whose passion, if you have read its secret existence, could raise him in your estimation with the highest?"

Theresa felt this rapid questioning quite overpowering. The blood rushed to her cheeks; she seemed to view her own mind in the borrowed light of her confessor's sagacity. She could not answer No, and durst not say Yes. But the prior continued,—

"Has not nature, and a maiden's longing, been too strong

for reason, and a parent's commands? In one word, fair daughter, dost thou not listen to and return the love of Renault Claassen?"

"Renault Claassen! No, no, holy father; Heaven and my pride forbid! Oh, you have, by the mention of that name, eased my heart of a load of terror!"

With these words, Theresa fell on her knees before the prior; and, raising her hands in supplication, she continued,—

"Yes, my revered and reverend father, you did terrify me; why, I know not, for my conscience is free of the crime you suspect me of. Oh, question me not so keenly; the very asking of your glance seems to convict me of some unknown, some unintended sin. But hear me, holy sir, while I implore your counsel; and aid me, support me by your wisdom—tell me the words of religion and the will of Heaven. My father has listened to a powerful and almost irresistible suggestion. He has named a suitor to me in such a way as leaves me not to doubt his wish that I should choose him from the rest. I almost blush to name him to you, father. How can I mention him?"

"Prithee, good child, be not so scrupulous. Thou must not pause to name him who may be thy husband."

"And do you, too, holy father, countenance his offers? Can you encourage his pretensions?"

"Nay, nay, sweet child, thou journeyest too fast. May it be that thy secret yearnings give spurs to my counsel? I can scarcely have encouraged the pretensions of one whom thou hast not yet named to me."

Theresa blushed at the penetrating look which accompanied these words, and hastily exclaimed,—

"Did I not, indeed, mention the name? My head is confused, good father."

"Perhaps thy heart, fair maiden?"

"I know not which; or if 'tis both, or either. I am, I fear me, very unhappy, or about to be so. I want to open my mind fully and frankly, but it seems as if I cannot. I know not what to say, or how to come to the object that is readiest in my mind, but it seems out of the reach of utterance."

"Well, well, my poor child, I must help thee from thy embarrassment, for I know all thou wouldst reveal. Calm

thysek, Theresa, and list to me. Thy sire, my old and valued friend, dazzled, perhaps, or let us say wisely influenced, by the solicitations of a hero, lends his wishes to the suit of one who bids fair to rival his great patron in valour and virtue; one who seems about to redeem the wild excesses of youth, by deeds of splendid expiation; such, they say, is Count Ivon de Bassenvelt."

"Can you thus depict him, holy father? Is this the portrait of one so lately denounced to infamy and execration?"

"I speak the truth, my child; at least as I have heard it vouched for, by a proud and pure authority. And mark thee, Theresa, I give no opinion of mine own; nor do I recommend thee aught but a dutiful regard to thy parent's will; nor do I yet counsel thee to blind obedience: thy conscience must be thy guide in all things."

"But then, my revered and surest friend, do you not at once advise that I reject with scorn the offers of him who has done sacrilege against our holy church?"

"Its doors are shut against no contrite sinner."

"He who has polluted consecrated ground?"

"The tears of penitence may yet wash out the stains."

"He who has outraged, in my person, what honour and delicacy hold most sacred?"

"Passion, my child, holds venial what innocence considers crime!"

"Oh, father, father! is it thus you palliate the criminal? Could you advise me to wed De Bassenvelt?"

"No, Theresa, no! I neither advocate him nor influence you. I leave him to his expiation—you to your choice. I merely expound the sentiments of our holy church. And this conference truly reported, as I know you will report it, if at all, will hold me clear of any attempt to thwart the public recommendation of the prince, or the private inclination of your father."

"Alas, alas! Then where am I to seek for counsel, if you leave me to myself? Where apply for aid in this emergency, if you refuse it to me?"

"Thy own heart, my daughter, may furnish both."

"Ah, holy father, if that prove treacherous, in proportion as you are cautious, much I fear me that heart will not long stand neuter; Heaven knows what side it will beat against!"

And if—oh, answer me, at least on this point—if, in some weakness of feeling, such a case as you just now falsely suspected should indeed arise; if this rebel heart, that at this moment riots in my breast, and throbs against the hand that would vainly keep it down, should, in despite of pride and prudence, mayhap of duty itself, tell me to love some youth, unfit to mate with the rich, the noble, but, it may be, the helpless and unhappy Theresa, what then must be her line of conduct? Must she stifle the voice of nature echoing in her bosom, and spurn, as frail or false, the very monitor you now bid her consult?"

"Nay, my sweet daughter, what bugbear possibility is this thou raisest? Should such a case arise, thou canst always come to me for counsel."

"And may you not throw me back as now on the very heart I should then fear and fly from? Or might not this case arrive when I am far from you? Oh, holy father, I tremble while I speak it; suppose it should chance to be on this very journey I am about to undertake?"

"Thy father——"

"Oh, name him not—I durst not——"

"Madame Marguerite——"

"Oh no, no! she is all unfit."

"Then mark me, Theresa! One sure, one solid, one devoted friend is left thee—one who is to me a second self, with heart and head for sentiment and sense combined; with skill to direct, courage to defend, and devotedness to die for, if the sacrifice might be required, the daughter of his benefactor and patron. On him thou mayest safely repose, and firmly reckon. Be he thy chosen confident, thy tried and ever to be trusted friend. Need I say more? Need I name his name? Does not thy heart now speak to thee, in true and genuine tones?"

"It does, it does, most reverend father. Speak not—name not his name! 'T were worse than dulness to hesitate, or need a voice beyond the one that stirs within my breast. Yes, I am now assured I feel the inspiring certainty of one sympathising soul being made to blend with mine. Your words seem spoken from beyond the sphere of corporal utterance. Oh, how enthusiastic, how rapturous a thrill shoots through me!—a flame that seems bright but burns not—shines

round me like a halo lighting me to happiness ! Let me hurry hence — let me away, holy father, ere I talk myself wild with joy ! I know not what I say or feel !”

“ Heaven speed thee — Heaven bless thee, Theresa — I leave thee to its care, my part is done ! I love thee as though thou wert mine own child ! Thy innocent heart is, must be, made for happiness ! Farewell, farewell, *my daughter !*”

These words were spoken with a burst of genuine tenderness and warmth that was utterly new to Theresa. The unrepressed expression of her own ardent feelings seemed to have struck forth a light that she knew not to exist in her confessor's character. All was a pleased confusion in her brain ; and she hurried from the cell in a mood of uncalculating animation. She thought not of using the mask she carried in her hand, according to the long existing fashion of the country, borrowed from more southern lands. But as she almost sprang from the doorway into the vaulted corridor, long since described to our readers, she started back on perceiving a man standing close beside the porch. A second glance told her it was no other than Master Lambert Boonen. Alarm was changed to rapture — but the transition was of lightning speed. She paused not on her way ; and sprang forward through the garden to the door that opened on the canal, where the boatmen waited to convey her back to home.

She entered the barge, and threw herself upon a seat, heedless of attitude, unconscious of gracefulness. She held her clasped hands before her, and looked above, as if wonderment and thanksgiving were mingling in her mind. A flash of conviction had passed over it. She seemed to see her fate reflected in the glass of time. She suddenly remembered her father's oft-told story of his first meeting with her mother at the door of Father Wolfert's cell ; and by a coincidence, which her previous frame of feeling, and the superstition that lingered in the age, and flowed in hereditary succession with her blood, had prepared her to magnify into a decree of destiny, she recollected that this day of her own actual adventure was the twentieth anniversary of that which brought her parents into juxta-position precisely parallel to her own. The inference she drew will be obvious, it is hoped, to the least superstitious as well as the least sceptical of our readers.

In three hours after this interview the travelling party were

in full route for Bruxelles. The way was led by the burgomaster's new and costliest coach, which, in the fashion of the day, though superbly gilt and decorated, was nevertheless unfurnished with the simple comfort of doors and windows. A leathern curtain, coarsely hung on an iron rod, was the only security against cold and rain yet afforded by the best kind of vehicles, glass being introduced into France from Venice for the first time about the year 1625, and looked on as the height of luxury. Four sleek and powerful horses, of the best breed of Flanders, driven by a coachman, dragged on Van Rozenhoed's gorgeous and cumbrous carriage, by a rope harness. Within it were seated its portly and somewhat pompous owner, with Madame Marguerite, carrying Fanchon on her lap, Theresa, and the apprentice. In a horse litter which followed was Nona, with the cases containing the dresses of the ladies, and one splendid suit for the burgomaster, destined for the day of audience at the archducal court. An escort of a dozen liveried retainers rode before and after the coach; and the rear was brought up by Jans Broeklaer and a few of the house menials, with three or four sumpter mules of the finest race of Spain, laden with mattresses and bed-covering, and some other necessary comforts, which the imperfect accommodation then afforded in the inns made indispensable for travellers of condition.

The other members of the deputation, a part of the eschevins, and others of the city functionaries chosen by Van Rozenhoed, all took to the road on horseback, having appointed a rendezvous with the chief magistrate at "The Imperial Crown," at that period the principal house of entertainment in Bruxelles, situated in one of the narrow streets branching out from the great square, which contained the Hôtel de Ville, the Broed Huys, and the mansions of some of the chief nobility of Brabant.

CHAPTER VII.

DURING the time occupied in the arrangements for the chief burgomaster's departure from Bruges, Don Juan de Trovaldo

was sitting in his private cabinet, formerly described, from the windows of which he had viewed the preparations at Rozenhoed House, and he finally saw the party set out from the open space in front of the mansion, in the order which was detailed in the last chapter.

The object of this movement he could not imagine nor ascertain ; for the whole expedition was resolved on so secretly, that none but the partisans of Prince Maurice had cognisance of it. The governor made vain efforts, through his aide-de-camps and domestics, to come at the truth ; but he could only obtain the conviction that a journey of some importance was in the contemplation of Van Rozenhoed and his family. Trovaldo's impatience at length broke all bounds ; and as he observed the carriages turn along the Duyver, and wheel away by Nôtre Dame towards the Ghent road, he started up, and with his usual savage air, he paced the room in colossal strides. He with difficulty repressed his first impulse to dart out at the head of his guards, arrest the progress of the party, and carry back Theresa by force. Had the strong excitement of passion inflamed him, such would no doubt have been his conduct. But Theresa's personal charms had failed to animate his pre-occupied mind ; and his wounded pride, in seeing her thus evading his authority, was not strong enough to make him brave the strict orders of the archdukes for moderation in the acts of his government. He knew he had already gone too far in the violent proceedings of the previous night. He had therefore listened to the midnight remonstrance of the eschevins ; and had removed the restrictions so hastily put upon the city in general. The syndic, Zannekin, had been released from his confinement ; but Trovaldo persevered, for consistency sake, in the detention of one prisoner ; and his private motives decided that that one should be Renault Claassen, against whom he pronounced his resolution to proceed with the utmost rigour.

As he strode through his chamber he burst into a soliloquy, which his fierce carelessness might have made audible to any listener, for he cared not for precautions, and as in his conference with Gaspar, his window lay wide open.

"Is it thus my proposals are received—my power despised?" muttered he, unconscious that he spoke aloud.—
"And does this fair-haired damsel too elude me, as my own

dark slave has done? Oh, Beatrice, how much more deeply is thy image graven here! By this heart and by my soul I swear thou shalt be mine, or perdition be my lot! How is my power imprisoned and caged up! I durst not seize this insolent goldbeater, and crush his daughter's pride in the sternness of my embrace. And the daring crew that venture to oppose my claims! That wretched syndic, the popinjay De Grimberghe, and the motley-coloured glutton, with the rest who have fled the scene of contest, the base-born burgher whom I have marked for punishment, and this gaudy baron, sent by the ministers themselves, as if to balk my views! What must I do? how guide myself in this embarrassed course? And then De Bassenvelt, that bold adventurer, to whom I owe a debt of vengeance doubly deep! How deal with all — with each? Where art thou, Gaspar? Why dost thou not return, to lay thy bloody dagger at my feet, and claim thy liberty, and lead me on to Beatrice? By Heavens I know not what to do, nor where to turn me! I want some counsellor. I am fit but to be the instrument of my own desires — I cannot rule nor regulate them. At least let me know, as well as may be, the nature of the obstacles that block my path. Let me scrutinise the men who stand between me and my designs! Ho, there! let the officer on duty attend me!" and as the ready subaltern appeared at the door, Trovaldo ordered him to lead forward Lyderic from the chamber where he still remained in close arrest.

"Sir baron," said the governor, controlling his emotion into a stern composure, as the prisoner haughtily entered and took the seat to which Trovaldo pointed, "it is scarcely to be looked for that I choose to justify my conduct in aught concerning my command of this good town. Large powers, you must be aware, are mine, and strong occasions call for harsh measures. It is thus I was forced to place you in arrest. Yet I would do all due honour to a man of rank so recommended as you have been. Let me then at once demand your plain avowal of the nature of your connection with the desperate rebel De Bassenvelt?"

"Let this token speak for me, Don Juan," said Lyderic, placing on the table the governor's own ring, which it will be remembered he received from Gaspar in the boat.

"What! How! Can this be so! Are you, indeed, the

brave informer against Beatrice's seducer — the bold denouncer of his treason?"

"Even so."

"And have I *thus* rewarded you? Baron, you know that Castilian pride cannot stoop to acknowledge itself wrong; but all the atonement that Spanish honour can admit, I offer you. I wave the impunity I might claim, and am ready on the spot to give you satisfaction at the rapier and dagger's point."

"You have said enough, señor — the wrong is atoned for. 'T was not a personal injury, but rather a political mistake. I offer you my hand, and with it my firm friendship."

"A generous and noble youth, by St. Ignatio's beard! I may not say *forgive*, but I pray you to forget! Then answer me: is De Bassenvelt dead — is Gaspar safe — and she, where is *she*? Why did you leave me thus in ignorance? Why not avow yourself yesterday? Why lead me to the risk of offering you indignity?"

"Simply, Don Juan, because I chose not to be bullied even by you, and that I might see and judge with my own eyes her for whom I was resolved to brave all risk. I answer your last question first."

"Good! To the others then, and quickly."

"Well then, in brief reply, I left the gates of Welbasch Castle just as the Moriscoe's dagger should be sheathed in De Bassenvelt's breast. The result I know not, and of Beatrice can tell you nought."

"This is but scant advice, indeed. Yet all may be accomplished, for I know what Gaspar, rightly urged, can execute. You are the very man I need. 'T is fate that has thrown you in my way. You hate De Bassenvelt? Wherefore, I ask nor care not."

"Cordially."

"You know the secret passes of his castle, its ramparts, galleries, and winding ways?"

"As well as I know your motives for the question, señor. I know where a mine may be safely laid and surely fired, to blow his boasted fortress into the air."

"And still some private pass, perhaps, whence a frail woman may be safely stolen erewhile?"

"I know its most concealed intricacies as the paths of my boyhood's sport, Don Juan."

"And do you still pretend for the hand of this fair heiress? Has your yesternight's reception cooled or fired your purpose?—reply boldly and frankly!"

"Fired it to the utmost daring, albeit your excellency threatened and forewarned me."

"'Tis bravely spoken, young sir. Now hear me. The fire you boast of is a vapoury cloud, compared to the flame which burns in me for Beatrice. To gain her back I give up all besides. The insolent scorn of this cold Fleming has changed the current of my blood towards her person, and as for her wealth, I utterly despise it. My sword is my estate, I want nor wish for no increase; and only wonder why or wherefore I thought of this girl. But Beatrice shall be mine again, ay, and for ever, if mortal man may gain his dearest purpose by the most desperate ends; and hark you, my worthy baron, and if you will, my worthier ally, I owe you a good act for the tidings you conveyed, and for the ill I have done you. I offer you a new compact. Be you my guide, my aid to destroy our common enemy, the rebel Ivon, if my slave has failed to do him death; gain me back Beatrice, and I here, on a soldier's faith, renounce all claim on the heiress you aspire to. You answer not, baron—am I not plain spoken?"

"Pardon me, señor. If I did pause awhile, 'twas but in marvel at your generous offer. Need I say I greedily accept it? Shall I swear faith to the conditions and to you?"

"No, sir—I ask no oaths. The name of a true Hidalgo be *my* guarantee. A noble of Brabant needs give no other pledge."

"We shall have stirring work on hand, Don Juan, to complete our purposes."

"Then let's about it bravely! In the first place, for your own particular part, you must look sharply to this heiress. I have cleared the way for your approach, by putting nine tenths of her suitors to flight, and throwing into prison him from whom most was to be feared."

"Who, the young tanner?"

"Ay, it is most like that this burgher's daughter would, after all, show favour to some low citizen, in preference to noble blood like yours, or even mine."

"I much doubt that inference, señor; I saw the pride of ancestry perched on her brow last night, and the tanner's son

shrank from its glance. I dread a far more distant and more dangerous rival. I doubt me, or rather let me say I know, that De Bassenvelt yet lives, and while he does, nothing will bar his daring. With woman for his prize, danger and difficulty but urge him on, like the wind in a vessel's sails."

"He must then be quickly disposed of, for both our sakes. I shall soon shake this eagle felon from his nest! and an active gallant like you can well forestall him in yon maiden's favour. No time is to be lost. You must forthwith press your suit, and follow on her track. She is no more in Bruges—Van Rozenhoed and his whole family are suddenly gone towards Ghent."

"Indeed! and think you, Don Juan, he means to stop there? I'll wager my whole warbrobe against a burgher's camblet cloak, that he is gone full speed to Brussels to work some mischief to your excellency."

"Ha! by the life blood of my saint" (and here the governor piously crossed himself), "you open a new light on me! you are a clever counsellor—my hopes are not belied—you are the very man I needed. How dull I have been to this!—But how now to circumvent this factious old burgomaster? He too must perish."

"Ay, and like t'other, for both our sakes, señor. However I may make way with the daughter, on personal grounds, he will never consent to give her to a faithful subject of the archdukes. Rebellion stands far higher than royalty in his regard."

"Death to the traitor!—Ha! who's there?"

This latter exclamation was caused by the entrance of the subaltern on duty in the anteroom, who announced that a burgher of the city claimed an immediate audience of Don Juan on matters of moment to the state.

"Let the citizen appear—these are times that suffer no delay. Nay, seat you again—I cannot spare you from my presence. Be now in my confidence though no longer in my keeping," said the governor, as Lyderic rose to retire with the officer, who presently returned leading in a sturdy looking man, of middle age, well dressed, and evidently of the higher class of citizens. He threw open his short cloak as if to give himself air, and drew off his beaver hat for the same purpose, rather than for any motive of courtesy, as was proved by his

immediately commencing to fan himself with its slouched leaf, and at the same time seating himself in the nearest chair.

"What's this?" exclaimed the governor haughtily; "your name and business, my good burgher?"

"Methinks you must know the first, and might divine the latter, Don Juan," answered the citizen.

"Mynheer Claas Claassen, if I err not?" replied Trovaldo, who could no longer feign ignorance of a man so notorious in the city, and whom he had often met on matters of public business.

"The same, and your excellency's poor servant."

"Ha! when my service is wanting, is it not so?"

"I want nought for which I may not give an equivalent, Don Juan," said Claas Claassen, with a tone that spoke a temper ruffled rather than subdued by his son's perilous circumstances.

"Somewhat has chafed you, mynheer, this morning," said the governor tauntingly.

"The danger of a dear child in such a power as yours might warm a colder spirit than mine," replied Claassen, wiping his brow with his taffeta lined cloak. "But 'tis not that which heats my blood just now, nor that alone that brings me to ask a favour from Don Juan de Trovaldo. In brief, I love my boy, but would sooner see him die by a Spanish axe than bow my knee to a Spanish governor, to be spurned as I know I should be in a case like this. Renault has raised the cry of Liberty, and that is but treason in your nation's creed. He worships his God in spirit more than form, and that is heresy!"

"Hold! at your peril stop your audacious tongue, or by our holy church, yourself and your rebel son shall die within the hour!"

The governor accompanied this threat by a stamp of his foot and a stroke of his clenched fist against the table, which brought the officer, with several of the guard, quickly into the room, and half a dozen halberds were immediately levelled at the citizen, as the natural mark for their assault. Claassen stood undauntingly up, as the governor pointed to the ready instruments that waited but a nod to put him to death; and as Don Juan waved his hand and they retired, a smile of rough contempt curled the bold burgher's lip.

"You see, mynheer, how soon I might have stopped your brawling breath," coolly observed the governor.

"And at the same time have smothered a secret of some importance to you," retorted Claas Claassen.

"Why, have you aught to reveal? If so, speak out—but not with boisterous insolence. What is your business here?"

"I *have* somewhat to reveal, and of no light moment either—but it is for your excellency's private ear. It is matter that concerns the state."

"You may freely utter this mighty secret, worshipful burgher. This gentleman, my friend, and the walls, may safely hearken to all you have to tell."

"Another sarcasm like that, Don Juan, and my lips are sealed. If I must not brawl, you shall not scoff, depend on it."

"Saint Jago! must I endure this fellow's insolence?" muttered Trovaldo, clenching his hand. "How shall I deal with him, baron?"

Lyderic, to whom this appeal was made, was impressed with the notion, which had failed to strike the furious Trovaldo, that it must be some serious information in the burgher's power of discovery that imparted to him so assuming and so fearless a tone. He therefore replied,—

"Bear with the worthy citizen, Don Juan. His temper is roused—he is a father, recollect, and allowance must be made on his son's account. Let him proceed in his own way."

"Go on then, Mynheer Claassen—my duty to the state commands me to hear your communications, and suppress my resentment," said Don Juan, throwing the greatest possible haughtiness into his looks.

"First then let those windows be closed—I do not choose to speak to every shrub in the goldbeater's gardens," exclaimed Claas Claassen, reseating himself with studied indifference.

"By St. Jago!" cried the governor, again raising his clenched hand: but Lyderic, by a short entreaty, stopped the rage which was mounting with the gesture; and stepping across the chamber, he shut the unwieldy frames of the open windows, and then took his place again beside the governor, anxious to keep down his overboiling indignation.

"Now, señor governor," said Claassen, "I am prepared

to speak ; but my first condition, and mind ye, I ask no *favour* at your hands, is my son's freedom."

Don Juan fiercely started, and would have burst again into the vehement utterance of his anger, had not Lyderic soothed him by a conciliating sentence ; and during the conference that followed, these cunning efforts were required between every sentence spoken by the intemperate pair.

" If your communication be of any worth, your son shall be free—but until it is proved to be so, your own head shall be hostage for his," muttered Trovaldo.

" And *should* they prove so, as they must do, what guarantee have I for his safety ?" asked the citizen.

" My honour !" answered Trovaldo, with another effort to suppress his indignation at the doubt implied.

" Humph !" growled Claas Claassen. " This baron, as you call him, be my witness to this promise."

" I vouch for its fulfilment with my life," said Lyderic.

" Then hear me, Don Juan," resumed Claassen ; " you tread on the brink of ruin. Van Rozenhoed is gone to Brussels, to lay at the foot of the archdukes' throne his plaint against your tyranny and last night's violence."

" Is this your pitiful secret ?" exclaimed Trovaldo, rising from his seat and throwing a look of scorn on the tanner. " Think you that the governor of Bruges has to learn the movements of its factious citizens from one of the most factious ? So this, Baron de Roulemonde, is the mouse with which this mountain burgher was so big ? Ha, ha, ha !" and the hoarse laugh was accompanied by a corresponding shaking of the governor's high shoulders and gaunt limbs, while his long rapier kept time against the oaken floor, and the chain belt it hung from clanked in every link.

" So, this is the wondrous revelation," continued he, " that is to gain the young rebel's pardon ! This the ruin that threatens to engulf Don Juan de Trovaldo ! This the secret that the leaves may not list to ! Ha, ha, ha !"

" Scoff on, señor, if such beseems your station and serves the state," drily said Claas Claassen, folding his arms across his breast, crossing his legs, and throwing himself still farther back in his chair—" I thought not you were so well informed. You know too, no doubt, that four of the eschevins, the greffier, and the liberated syndic, with a score of citizens

of wealth and influence, are now on their various roads to Brabant, to join the burgomaster, and clamour forth their corporate accusations against your all-wise excellency !”

“ What ! Ha ! Is it so ? ” exclaimed Trovaldo, interrupting the tanner. “ Do they dare to conspire in masses of revolt ? By Heavens my troops shall scour the roads around, and crush them every one ! ” and he would have rushed from the room, to issue orders in accordance with this passionate vow, had not Lyderic withheld him, and strongly urged a calm consideration of the threatened peril.

“ Be it so ! ” said the somewhat less infuriate governor, “ I submit me to your prudence, baron ; what next, Mynheer Claassen ? ”

“ Is not this enough, señor ? What would you more ? Have I not given you warning of your enemies’ efforts sufficient to place you on your guard ? Is my son free ? Have I not redeemed my pledge ? ”

“ No ! ” vociferated Trovaldo, “ not half redeemed it ! What care I for the base-born herd that dare to mean me ill ? Do I stand so low that I may not o’ertop such enemies as these ? I have listened to you with a patience which belies the noble blood that boils in my veins. You may now depart—your son shall pay the forfeit of this confederate treason. Away, sir !—The governor of Bruges disdains all further parley with its leather-dressers. Retire ! ”

“ Did I reckon wrong, Don Juan ? And you, my bold baron, who were so ready to pledge your life on this governor’s faith, what say you now ?—was it worth the pledge ? ” asked Claassen, without moving from his posture of insolent carelessness. Lyderic was convinced that something more than mere indifference to danger on his own and his son’s part actuated the tanner, and he therefore replied,—

“ Methinks, Mynheer Claassen, you make too long a matter of this. One of your sharp mind and blunt bearing must know your position, and see it is a false one. You promised revelations touching the state. Where are they ? Do you expect Don Juan de Trovaldo to be the dupe of those paltry burghers you spoke of, and who, it would seem, have sent you here to play a part for their own purposes ? ”

“ They send me here ! They make a tool of me ! They who have slighted, scorned, and dared to pass me by ! ” ex-

claimed Claassen, losing all self-command, starting from his seat, and advancing towards Lyderic and the governor. "No! you mistake me, it seems, as they have done. But ye shall be soon set right. Ay, though all Bruges should shake to its foundations."

"'Tis strange," said Lyderic, penetrating the tanner's mind, and fanning the flame that burned in it, and at the same time secretly urging his elbow against Trovaldo's side,—"'tis marvellous that one of civic station, such as you, mynheer, and of no doubtful politics neither, should not form one of a deputation framed even on a pretext of the city's privileges?"

"Ay," exclaimed Trovaldo, rather tardily discovering the bent of Lyderic's observations, and willing to aid their effect,—
"ay, and one, it must be in truth confessed, who slinks not in corners with a coward caution, but has ever manfully spoken his mind, be it right or wrong."

"True—you speak truly, Don Juan; and, even though it be for once only, you do but justice to me. Yet this gold-beater, this upstart, this pride-bloated Roozen, he who had never been chief magistrate of Bruges but for my influence, has dared to cast me aside; and with his Papist faction—nay, loose your rapier's hilt, Don Juan, I *will* speak what I think and feel—he with his bigot crew dares to act in a case like this, without one word of counsel 'twixt them and *us*, the true patriots of the city. *They* make us free without our own consent! *They* serve the city, to our exclusion!—No! They have passed the bounds of my endurance, and dear shall be the forfeit! Hark ye, Don Juan! From your wealth of wisdom can you spare me the knowledge of one poor fact? From your store of words can you answer me one plain question? Who supped in Siger Roozen's private parlour last night? Who passed the city's gates in the guise of an Amsterdam trader, with that ill-favoured hypocrite, Van der Gobble, who came as 't were a courting to her who scorns ye all, save one silly lad, who is frightened at his own good fortune? Can you not answer me? One word in your ear, then, governor," and leaning with both palms on the table, he stretched across, and putting his face close to Don Juan's, he said, in a hoarse under-tone that sounded hollow and treacherous in the vaulted ceiling—"Maurice of Nassau!"

Trovaldo sprang up from his chair, but Claassen placed his rough hand on his shoulder, and held him down again.

“ Hold ! ” cried he, “ that is not all. Who broke bread and dipped in the dish with the prince and his host ? The prior of Saint Andrew’s ! Who noted down their secret conference, and registered their private compact ? Lambert Boonen, the prior’s nephew, the underhand tool of all his projects, the unknown, despised, yet daring rival of ye all for the sly maiden’s heart ! Have I now spoken out ? Have I said enough ? Is the state concerned in this ? Are your own interests compromised ? And *which* is dearer to ye, valiant and virtuous lords ? ”

Much more was added to this rapid revelation by the almost frenzied Claassen. The first bounds passed of honour and faith, he hurried on in heedless fury, hoping to hide himself in deeper infamy from his already roused remorse, like the bird that believes the hunters baffled, when its head is concealed from their view.

Whatever was the result of the conference between the corrupt triumvirate, Claas Claassen was seen within an hour after noon swaggering through the streets of Bruges with an air of desperate bravado ; while his son Renault walked by his father’s side more like a conscience-stricken felon than a freeman loosed from his chains.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE unconscious objects of the conspiracy thus commenced and hourly ripening journeyed meanwhile along the road to Ghent, at a pace more rapid than we are wont to attribute to the movements of travellers in those early days of coach-making. The heavy horses, skilfully guided along the broad paved causeway, made light of their load ; and the cavalcade that followed the chief vehicle regulated its movements by that. Several of the members of the deputation were overtaken as they trotted slowly on, on horses of various value, in high-peaked saddles, with valisses, or portmanteaus, strapped behind and before, slouched hats and spacious cloaks, the common

costume and accoutrements of cavaliers of the time of almost all ranks. Some of more lively temper than the slowly-plodding seniors cantered and caprioled for a while beside the carriage, offered complimentary salutations to the ladies, or exchanged words and looks of impressive meaning with Van Rozenhoed, who gazed proudly on the companions that acted on the occasion subordinate parts to himself.

Madame Marguerite enjoyed the whole scene with all the buoyancy of her good-natured disposition. She saw the sky without a cloud, and the world without a care. Almost forgetful of the tumults of the previous night, she calculated not the chances of the morrow. She had no perception but of the present; and rolling along in her cousin's carriage, handsomely attired, honourably attended, and with Fanchon on her lap, the gossiping cheerfulness, which rarely met with a check, was amply indulged. While the burgomaster reclined in his corner, deep in thought, or chatted at times in an under voice to some one of the deputies who bent their heads close to the curtains of the carriage, the worthy dame held forth to Theresa and the apprentice (placed side by side on the opposite seat), in full indulgence of her innocent and unmeaning prattle. Not a château was seen with its tall brick chimneys and high gables peering through the trees, but Madame Marguerite entered into a genealogical dissertation on the family it belonged to. Every village drew forth a similar descant on its lord paramount, or grand seigneur. The dingy walls of several convents to the right and left led to monotonous anecdotes of priors, abbots, and abbesses, with conversions and miracles without end. She was, in fact, a living road-book, peerage-list, and grammar of heraldry combined; and with the usual acuteness of small intellects, she remembered to a league the distance from village to village, and château to château; with all the dates of births, marriages, and deaths of half the families between Bruges and Brussels.

Almost heedless of, and wholly indifferent to, her innocent gabble, Theresa and her nearer companion seemed, for the earlier part of the journey, immersed in their own thoughts. They rarely spoke; but in the few words they from time to time uttered, there was a tone of softened animation, the inseparable consequence of a close neighbourhood to an object which the heart, even unknown to itself, approves. The

parting scene with the prior, and the *rencontre* immediately following it, produced in our heroine an exhilaration of spirit that would at every moment have overflowed, had not the presence of him whom she now acknowledged to herself to be the being of all others she most wished to be near repressed every word, and checked every thought that longed for utterance. Yet there was nothing painful in this. Her heart told her that a sympathy existed with all she felt; and when those stifled words and thoughts rushed back into her bosom's depth, it did not throb with an oppressive sense of fulness, but rather swelled in the consciousness of a secret delight intuitively shared by another. The heart that is replete with love is also instinct with penetration. The passion that pervades it quickens its perceptions; and, without a word or act of positive evidence, it catches with unerring promptness the only truth it cares to seek for. Theresa had therefore no doubt as to the apprentice's sentiments towards her. And if she, with all the tenderness and timidity of woman's nature, was so alive to this conviction, what must have been *his* as to her state of feeling, urged on to the discovery as he was by all the ardour of manhood? He was assuredly well satisfied of the truth. For—and at once let us avow the fact—he had followed from the first the one great object of gaining Theresa's affections, with which view he had been (as Claas Claassen had well divined) introduced into Rozenhoed House by the wily prior, from whom he received ample details of her parting visit to the cloister, with the means of excitement by which he had so successfully worked her up to the very point of an avowal that was scarcely necessary to one who watched her so narrowly.

The party reposed the first night at Ghent, where they arrived rather late, notwithstanding the excellence of their equipage. Van Rozenhoed sat erect with pride as he rattled over the pavement, and crossed a large portion of the three hundred bridges which connect the twenty-seven islands on which this celebrated city is built. The long existing rivalry between it and Bruges had by no means ceased at this epoch; and although a common interest had, on occasion of "the pacification," induced them to act in concert against the main enemy, yet the old jealousy was now revived, with sufficient force to prevent any direct co-operation in the newly-projected

effort for liberty. Bruges had once more taken the lead ; and her magistrates, in the spirit of partisanship, rather than patriotism, determined to exclude the rival city from it. The deputation therefore passed through as mere individuals ; and as the burgomaster and his friends moved in grand cavalcade through the streets the following morning, they left the men of Ghent to stare and wonder at the pomp and circumstances of their display.

The next day brought the travellers to Alost, where Van Rozenhoed determined on stopping, that they might have but a short distance to go the following morning ; and with horses refreshed, and their whole equipments in good order, make an imposing entry into Brussels, worthy the reputation of the city they represented, and the importance of the cause they came to plead.

In proportion as they drew near the capital of Brabant, the seat of the archducal government, and approached to the close contact with sovereignty, in the strong hold of its grandeur and power, the burghers were affected with a mixture of resolution and awe, that gave to them an air becoming the solemnity of their situation. It was not, however, to be expected that the apprentice and Theresa were to be deeply imbued with those feelings, or stamped with this appearance. As for her, she felt nothing but a lightness of heart and mind, that animated her with a previously unknown effect. The fine spring weather, the variety of the journey to her for whom it had all the charms of total novelty, and the sensations before described which bounded in her breast, combined to give Theresa a tone of surpassing grace and loveliness ; and the apprentice seemed fully to feel its inspiration. By degrees he broke from the delicious reverie which the first day had seemed to absorb him. It appeared, too, that the approach to the scene of political interest had its share in the excitement under whose influence he looked and spoke. Altogether he grew hour after hour more animated and more agreeable to his fair neighbour ; and even Madame Marguerite yielded to him the chief place which she had at first occupied in the conversation of the road. The youth flew from subject to subject with a vivacity and power that held both the ladies in their various ways delighted ; and in the occasional bursts of patriotic zeal which garnished his discourse, the burgomaster felt him-

self carried away, even beyond the flight of his own enthusiasm.

About noon, on the third day's journey, the Bruges deputation passed within the old and formidable ramparts of Brussels, by the Flanders gate; not without a glance of angry annoyance at the bas relief above their heads, representing the army of their Flemish ancestors driven out from the very gate they now passed through by the turnspits and scullions of Brussels, and thus commemorating a disgraceful surprise and defeat which actually was effected by the efforts of such unworthy adversaries in the year 1356.

The citizens came out in crowds to gaze on the proud array; and the whole were in a short time lodged in their different quarters, duly bespoke and prepared for their reception by the outriders of Van Rozenhoed's household, sent forward for the purpose.

No sooner were the burgomaster and his family established in their hostel than a scene of bustling occupation commenced between him, his apprentice, or, as he now stood acknowledged, his secretary, with the chief members of the deputation. One of the eschevins, accompanied by half a dozen armed followers, bearing the badge of the city of Bruges emblazoned on their surcoats, proceeded, as soon as dinner was over, to the archdukes' palace with a written announcement to Don Christoval Zaputa, signed by Van Rozenhoed, that he and others of the magistrates and citizens of Bruges had arrived in Brussels, and claimed the honour of an audience on the earliest possible day, to lay before their highnesses the archdukes a petition of moment, touching the privileges of their city, and to be heard in complaint against the illegal violence of its governor, Don Juan de Trovaldo.

To this haughty and uncompromising declaration of war, as it might be fairly considered, an answer was, in the course of the afternoon, returned, couched in very courtly and conciliating phrase, and appointing, by their highnesses' command, the hour of two o'clock on the day but one following, for the reception of the worshipful burgomaster and his goodly company, to fulfil the object of their mission before the archdukes in full council in the audience chamber of the palace. The tone of this official communication considerably elevated the spirits of Van Rozenhoed and his townsmen. The old Flemish

pride was up to its highest pitch. They contemplated the glory of reading a new lesson to their tyrants, even in the very teeth of their prerogative; and they anticipated the humiliation that was to fall on Trovaldo, and all the Spanish faction they had left behind, lulled in a false security. A few of the chief men of the deputation, Van Rozenhoed's most intimate friends, passed the remainder of the evening with him at his apartments in "The Imperial Crown." They did not, on this occasion, resort to the common means of killing time. No chess, or glee, or primero table, assembled round it faces distorted with worthless calculations or unworthy anxiety. Matter more manly occupied their minds; and they debated and resolved the measures to come, as men intent on the grand object of their country's deliverance, with some of the weakness and over-sanguine anticipation excusable in the circumstance.

During the evening thus occupied in council by the male part of the deputation, Madame Marguerite and Theresa, forming its female dependencies, employed themselves in their private chamber, arranging plans for the morrow, overlooking their dresses, which were carefully displayed by Nona, and preparing all those articles for the toilette essential to the figure which their station required them to make in their public appearance in the streets of Brussels the next day. Theresa gave many an impatient sigh as Madame Marguerite disserted on the various merits of lace, brocade, and embroidery, and she longed for the breaking up of the party in the large parlour below, wondering what could occupy them so long and so entirely, and why Master Lambert Boonen at least could not find a moment to come and cheer them after their fatiguing journey, with some quaint tale or lively anecdote, such as he had so pleasantly recounted on the road. It seemed as if the constant habit of seeing him beside her for three whole days had made his presence essential to her comfort; and as hour after hour struck from the clock of the town-house in the great square hard by, she became increasingly dissatisfied; till at last a message from her father (borne by Jans Broeklaer) recommended her to hasten to bed, as there was no probability of his friends separating for still some time. Considerably disappointed, and somewhat inconsiderately discontented, Theresa at length followed her father's recommendation; but

it was long ere sleep relieved her, in her own despite, from the chagrin which, with strange perversity, she felt willing to indulge.

“Better,” quoth she to herself, as she finally nestled her head in the down pillow which had so often received its nightly pressure (for Nona took good care to let it form part of the travelling equipment),—“better to think of him even in disappointment than not think of him at all! Better, oh, far better, to suffer than be insensible! Oh, Master Lambert Boonen, how pleasant, how intelligent, how interesting thou art! Why art thou not such in all respects as would entitle me to think of thee as more than a gay companion—or even, in emergency, as a mere friend! Ah, well-a-day! I would thou hadst been all my father requires, and that I myself would have thee to be—noble, one who had done, or were like to do, good service to our country. And why didst thou not appear to-night, to cheer us awhile in this strange place, so comfortless without thy presence? Indeed, it was ill done, Master Boonen: but I forgive thee—I would not sleep with an evil thought or angry recollection. Good night, good night, Lambert! May Saint Anne watch over thee!”

In mental murmurings like these, our heroine's spirit quietly sank into repose. She heard no more the feet of the citizens, the trampings of horses' hoofs, nor the tolling of the bells. Every street sound was hushed. The low whistling of the wind through the ill-closed windows was all that spoke to her in outward or ordinary tones; and in a little more even this murmur seemed to exist within herself. Visions of strange enchantment rose upon her mind. It passed at once into the world of shadows. Scenes of indistinct delight swam before her. Prominent in all was the figure of the apprentice in thousands of fanciful forms; while the sweet notes of the voice that sung the night song beneath her turret mixed with the imagined harmonies that filled her dreams.

CHAPTER IX

At five o'clock the next morning, Theresa was awake from her delicious slumbers by the tolling of the great bell of St.

Gery, which sounded regularly at that hour in those days, as a warning to the brewers that they might legally begin their task of beer-making. Theresa started at the sounds, and would willingly have slept and dreamt again. But the matin noises of the city, in the very heart of which the hostel was situated, made such further indulgence impossible, and told her that she was now in a neighbourhood far more bustling and boisterous than any to be met in her own elegant and quiet town. The city swarms began to buzz in all their various intonations. The lowing of oxen and bleating of sheep told her that the cattle mart was at hand, while the rumbling of heavy chariots proclaimed to more accustomed ears the vicinage of the corn market, with those for poultry, vegetables, fruits, and the other sundry productions necessary for the consumption of a large population. As soon as the daylight came fully into her unshuttered windows, she awoke Nona, who occupied a closet in her room; and, restless to begin the rounds of the day's occupation, she hastened her preparations for dressing, and was soon ready to descend for breakfast.

The others of the party were not less active, nor had one of them fallen asleep earlier or awoke later than our heroine, each being affected, as was she, by their several anti-dormant anxieties. The particular nature of these must be left to our reader's imagination, that friendly associate which so often steps in to fill up the vacuum which the minutest chronicler is as often forced to leave.

At nine o'clock, the world of fashion, as it then existed in Brussels and other great towns, having eaten and sufficiently digested their hearty morning meal, began to go forth, in all the idle employments of busy nothingness, which their degenerate descendants of the present time commence some five or six hours later. Van Rozenhoed's coach was at the door of his hostel, the four black steeds refreshed from their journey, shining and sleek, and gorgeously caparisoned in the state-harness and housings carefully brought from Bruges. The coachman was imbedded in his ponderous seat, which was covered with a leopard's skin of considerable value, and he held his reins of leather twisted round with many coloured ribands, loosely in either hand. Two outriders took their station in front, and four varlets on foot stood one at the head of each coach-horse, and provided with hazel rods, to urge on

their speed in obedience to the directions of the pilot charioteer, who guided, but scorned to flog them. And in front of all was an equerry appointed by the minister to attend on, and act as guide to, the burgomaster and his friends.

Van Rozenhoed handed Madame Marguerite to her place in the carriage. Theresa came next, but not escorted as she wished, and as we might have wished her to be; for the presence of old Nicholas Zannekin, the syndic, tottering by her side, told that he was to supply the place during the morning's drive that had been filled during the journey by the apprentice secretary, who was now obliged to remain within doors, in the ample occupation which the circumstances gave him.

Van Rozenhoed showed himself in full view as a sample of Flemish splendour to the admiring citizens. Madame Marguerite was in the highest tone of spirits. They, like her silk brocade, were rose-coloured, and they gave their hue to every thing she saw. Theresa was dull, silent, and sad. Zannekin nodded assent to all that was spoken, and approbation to all the others saw, for he slept soundly in his corner during nearly the entire drive. And many sights were seen on that occasion, which we should particularly enumerate did we wish to tantalise the reader by exciting curiosity which can no longer be gratified. Almost all the wonder-moving monuments of that time have, for many and many a year, ceased to exist. Churches and monasteries, in which Brussels was then so rich, long low levelled to the earth; pictures of price, crumbled to decay from neglect, or carried off to other lands, and leaving the city comparatively destitute; collections of curiosities, for ages scattered to the winds: the plumed cap of Montezuma, the sword of Pizarro, the war-harness of Charles V., the dark lantern which lighted him on many a perilous night-watch, the standard of France, which he seized at the battle of Pavia, with the armour of Philip the Good, the great Duke of Parma, and others, while that of Alva grew rusty with remorse, as it was shone on by the lustre of those of so many heroes; such were a few of the articles contained in the Heraldic Chamber, as was called an ancient building that stood on the confines of the park, and is now trampled out of memory almost by the extensive foundations of the king's palace.

And as the party came out from viewing such exciting relics, and mounted the ramparts, which then stood close to the edge of the park, the lofty trees of which spread over the extent now covered at all sides by princely buildings, they saw a party of courtiers within, hunting a stag with greyhounds; while in a swampy hollow, the bottom of which was covered by a small lake, another group was seen, chiefly consisting of females, one of whom stood conspicuous in dress and appearance, and was attended at a respectful distance by the others. This lady was tall of person, and of a lofty bearing, habited in a close fitting suit of green richly embroidered, with the high stiff ruff and coif, and a little pointed hat, such as is made familiar to us in the portraits of her contemporary Elizabeth, Queen of England. Theresa and her party could not distinguish her features; but their guide informed them they gazed on no less a personage than the Archduchess Isabella, who, with her favourite band of courtly attendants, was enjoying her favourite sport of heron shooting. Ere Theresa had time to express her astonishment at this somewhat unfeminine amusement, one of those birds, which were preserved in quantities on the borders of this artificial lake, and fed on the fish, with which it was well stocked for their support, rose lazily up from the rushes and flaggers that were beaten with rods by a couple of pages, whose sole service was the care of these sports. As the bird contracted into a curve its long neck and expanded its wings for flight, the archduchess raised an ebony stocked fusil, light in comparison with the arquebusses then in use among such sportsmen as had adopted fire-arms in the field, and putting it to her shoulder, and taking steady aim, she pulled the clumsy trigger. The bird fell wounded on the surface of the lake, and struggled over towards a bunch of rushes for protection. The royal sportswoman coolly handed her weapon to an attendant to be reloaded, and then advanced to assist in seizing her mangled prey, which, with shrill cries and desperate struggles, resisted the efforts of the pages to drag it to shore. It flapped its unmaimed wing, and darted forth its neck, directing its beak with instinctive judgment towards the eyes of its assailants: but experience taught them to avoid its assaults, and they hung back, either from fear of the heron, or in flattery towards their mistress, who boldly approached, and seizing the struggling bird by the throat, she

bore it away, fluttering and dying, and hoarsely shrieking in her grasp.

Theresa, disgusted and sickened at the sight, entreated her father to leave the spot, and the carriage was in consequence soon again in motion towards other exhibitions than this. The sacred elm that stood in the waste ground, afterwards converted into the Duke of Aremberg's garden, close to the gross tour, as it was called—one of the round towers of the ramparts between the gates of Namur and Halle—next became the object of observation. The spot was famous for the torture and execution of the Jews convicted of sacrilege in the year 1370, which led to the jubilee, since regularly celebrated every fifty years, in honour of “the holy sacrament of miracles.” After duly viewing and wondering at the triple-branched elm, each member of which, growing in the form of a cross, marked with supernatural reproach the scene of this unchristian sacrifice, the party resumed their carriage, and proceeded towards the square called the Great Sablon, where a considerable crowd was gathered to view the assemblage of the *guldens* or guilds, composed of the wealthiest citizens of the different companies of archers, which were about to commence their feats of bowmanship. The various companies of the Holy Virgin, Saint George, Saint Sebastian, and others, were drawn up in various lines in the large court, surrounded by a brick wall, which extended from the church of Notre Dame des Victoires far into the Sablon, but is now covered by a mass of houses, ingeniously disfiguring, if not wholly hiding, the view of the fine gothic pile.

The loud flourishing of trumpets, and other musical sounds, announced the approach of the archduchess, who was not only to preside at the sports, but to enter the lists herself, as a shooter at the artificial bird placed on the topmost vane of the church, a more delicate indulgence of her sporting propensities than that she had been just enjoying. Considerable bustle took place among the *guldens*. The archers formed themselves in files, and prepared to string their bows and fit their arrows. Many a brave heart throbbed, and sinewy arms shook nervously from anxiety, which is often, on more serious occasions, mistaken for fear. The golden vase intended for the principal prize was placed on an elevated pedestal, and surrounded by others supporting the minor rewards, in the centre of the court-

yard, where the dignitaries of the court and city, and the chief of the nobility, were stationed. Here Van Rozenhoed and his party were allowed by special favour to enter; and proudly did he hold his head among these magnates, whom he reckoned on so soon seeing prostrate at his feet.

During the preparations for the commencement of the sport, the archduchess occupied an armed chair on a platform covered with tapestry, from which she was visible to the whole mass of spectators that filled the Sablon, and the nearest parts of the various streets that opened into it. It was arranged that she was to discharge the first quiver of three shafts, as a mark of honour to her sovereign station, and to spare her unpractised efforts the humiliation of coming after those of the many expert and experienced bowmen who meant to contest the prize. She wore the same dress in which Theresa had observed her about an hour before: it was the uniform of the company of the Holy Virgin, of which she was the peculiar patroness, although she was an honorary member of all the others as well. She rose from her chair on a signal sound of trumpets being loudly blown and echoed from the walls around. The multitude was in a moment hushed, and during her preparation a respectful silence was maintained. She took the ready strung arbalette from the hand of an attendant nobleman. Another presented to her a silver-tipped arrow, which she adroitly placed in the bow. Then measuring the object high above her with keen and piercing eye, throwing her right foot back, and taking a firm and graceful attitude, she slowly raised her left arm above her head, at the same time drawing back the other, till the bow had acquired its utmost bend, and the string and feathered shaft just touched her ear, when pausing a moment for a steadier aim, she loosed her fingers from the string, and following with her gaze the arrow's upward flight, she saw it pass within a feather's breadth of the mark; and after a few moments of perpendicular ascent, it turned point downwards, and true to the then undiscovered principle which brings all things to the earth, it sunk deep into the sandy soil at the foot of the platform.

A loud murmur of astonishment buzzed through the crowd; but it was suppressed by respect for the performer of the feat, and by a general notion that chance rather than skill had directed the shaft. After a theatrical pause, and flourish, and

note of preparation, the archduchess again stood up, and with steady hand, firm foot, and fervid eye, she repeated her attempt. This time the arrow's point struck the small cross-bar of the vane, close to its junction with the rod, on the end of which the artificial bird was fixed, and a portion of its plumage, loosened by the shock, floated round the vane, and was carried away by the wind, while the blunted arrow descended on the roof of the church.

A shout of approbation burst around, but in a moment it ceased as the self-checked crowd recollected that royalty was not held liable to those vulgar tributes of praise. Many persons on the leads of the church scrambled along the roof in rivalry to gain possession of the arrow so skilfully shot from their sovereign's hand. A great bustle took place among the courtiers. Considerable interest was excited throughout the thronged spectators. And even the archers who had before felt so anxious for their own success now joined the sympathising crowd in prayers that the archduchess might, in her next essay, succeed in carrying away the prize they had individually promised to themselves.

When Isabella next arose, her calm air of conscious skill and lofty look of indifference contrasted strongly with the intense anxiety evinced in the countenances of her subject observers. As she handled her arbalette once more, fitted her arrow in its rest, and took her final attitude and aim, a thrill was visible through the whole mass, but not a sound was heard. The whizzing flight of the shaft seemed prolonged tenfold its real extent; and thousands of eager eyes that watched it winked in agitated doubt, as they saw it strike and stick in the wooden but thick fledged effigy, which tottered on its pinnacle for an instant, and then came rolling over and over through the air, until it fell on the very steps of the platform where the archduchess stood.

Then a universal shout arose. This outburst of the gathering excitement was powerfully effective. It read a short loud lesson to all listeners, of the ease with which the public mind may be aroused, and of the importance which the *people's voice* can give to the most insignificant concerns. Tumultuous acclamation burst on all sides, and the whole mass was broken into enthusiastic groups, which vied with each other in the expression of their loyal delight. All notion of competition was at

an end. No one thought of his own intended triumph, or rather, every one felt that of the archduchess to be his. No rivalry or jealousy was felt; and in a few minutes all were deeply occupied in preparing for the grand procession to the palace to escort the archduchess, now queen of the grand guild of the arbalette, and her well won prize, for which no competitor could presume to enter the lists.

While Theresa looked on at the whole of this scene, with many a mental glance thrown back at the hostel where she had left the apprentice at his solitary, and she thought irksome, occupation, she could not resist a sentiment of awe towards the principal actor in it, while she could not avoid admiring her confidence and skill: yet the impression made on her altogether was unpleasing; and she felt relieved when the princess was proudly borne away on a triumphal car, splendidly gilt and decorated, and followed by a long train of coaches, the various companies of archers, and the shouting mob, that brought up the rear. It was just then, as her father gave the signal to one of his attendants to have the carriage (from which he and his party had descended) drawn up at the gate of the courtyard, and as he prepared to lead the ladies from the crowd, that Theresa felt a paper placed in her hand, which hung carelessly by her side. Her fingers instinctively closed; and as she started and looked round, some dozen of faces met her gaze, all quite unknown to her, and each apparently intent on the scene. She cast her eyes down towards her still closed hand, and she saw that a sealed letter was within it. She felt at the instant disposed to let it fall on the ground; but an impulse which we do not care minutely to define prompted her more forcibly to retain it, and before she had time to balance the reasons and feelings for and against, her father, on whose arm she leant, hurried her away. She was soon seated in the carriage, the so strangely acquired billet carefully hidden in the folds of her richly brodered silk mantle; and a blush of consciousness of her deception colouring her ingenuous countenance.

The carriage rolled along down the narrow and steep streets that lead from the Sablon to the great square. As it was on the point of entering the latter by the eastern side of the town-house, while Theresa, notwithstanding her embarrassment, spared one admiring glance at the cluster of octagonal towers

so beautifully grouped together at that part of the building, a straggling crowd was visible within the square; and on the carriage driving into it the whole party were more or less shocked at observing a high gibbet standing in the centre, from which the figure of a man hung dangling as its legs were pushed to and fro by a group of idle boys, while several parties of elder vagabonds lounged near, and loudly laughed, or passed rude jokes at the sport.

"'Tis but an effigy," cried Van Rozenhoed, as Theresa covered her eyes with her hands, and Madame Marguerite stopped her ears, lest some struggling death tones might have reached them. As Theresa raised her looks, the good dame uncovered her ears, and they all read clearly the words "The traitor, Ivon de Bassenvelt," painted on a red board fastened to the top of the gibbet: and they plainly heard the proclamation of political denouncement against the living subject of this disgrace, uttered by a herald whose duty it was to rehearse the document at various periods during the continuance of the exhibition; while before a small altar, close beside, a monk of ferocious mien loudly recited the religious anathema, meant to give double force to the civil decree.

The effect of all this upon the various observers was widely different. Van Rozenhoed felt an involuntary shudder of superstitious dread, and thought he read in this anticipation of De Bassenvelt's fate a probable warning of what might be his own. But still he did not shrink one instant from the purpose he had in view, or from the dangers that lay between him and it. "No," said he to himself, as the carriage went on, "no! neither rack, block, nor gibbet, shall turn me back from my design."

Far different were the reflections of Nicholas Zannekin. His arrest at Bruges, a few nights before, had given a considerable shock to his patriotism. The ground on which it stood seemed trembling under it, and it was utterly overthrown by the visible contemplation of their doom, dealt out even emblematically to another. He determined to take the earliest and easiest opportunity of backing out of the conspiracy, for an entrance into which his recollection of Seneca now convinced him he had never been qualified.

Madame Marguerite, in her crude conceptions, which with persons of her class stand instead of opinions, thought that

condemnation and cursing were very properly exercised against the seducer of a novice, and the instigator of a rebellion ; and she, moreover, recalled to her mind many recollections of the family failings of the race of De Bassenvelt, which convinced her that its present representative had a hereditary title to be hanged, and damned into the bargain.

Theresa was deeply affected by what she gazed at and heard, with feelings of disgust and horror. The whole proceeding struck her as brutal in the extreme, and she was roused to the highest pitch of sympathy with the object of such outrageous but impotent violence. In all the varieties of feeling she had lately undergone relative to De Bassenvelt, she had experienced nothing which so forcibly appealed to her in his favour as this attempted dishonour upon him. Whenever she came in contact with his name, it seemed to carry some direct or negative claim upon her. The latter was strongly conveyed in the present instance ; but her alarm, on finding the train into which her thoughts were turning, was checked by one counteracting spell. The recollection of the apprentice seemed naturally to arise, to protect her from the influence of another's claim upon her heart ; and she had fully relapsed into feelings which had Lambert Boonen for their main object, when the carriage drove into the court-yard of " The Imperial Crown." She suddenly recollected the paper she held so carefully in her grasp. Hurrying to her apartment, she opened it, unperceived by Madame Marguerite or Nona, and she read as follows : —

" Trust not to appearances — your father is betrayed. Powerful agents are at work to involve both him and you in dangers that can be but hinted at by the friend who writes this scrawl. Be prepared for the worst. Nor let *him* be secure, who trusts to his seeming humbleness to forward his proud hopes. Patriotism is but treason in the eye of tyranny. The boldest of your suitors is marked for destruction. Let the most artful beware ! De Bassenvelt hangs in effigy this moment, a doomed felon. Boonen may be the next victim."

This first anonymous communication which Theresa had ever received affected her as a warning and a mystery might be expected to do to a young and ingenuous mind. She was bewildered and affrighted. An evident danger would not have produced a thousandth part the effect. She saw a menace to

her father, the extent of which she knew not ; a promised peril to herself, as undefined ; and a threat, visibly meant for *him* for whom all her anxieties were alive. She thoroughly read the meaning of every allusion in the scrawl. She recalled the prior's parting words. She was convinced that she had a friend and counsellor at hand ; and, believing that the crisis was already come in which her confessor's advice was to be acted on, she found an occasion during the preparations for dinner to show the paper to the apprentice. She made few remarks previous to putting it into his hand ; and no sooner had she done so, than she felt overwhelmed with a sense of her boldness, and she would have given worlds to have recalled the act, even at the risk of all the threatened evil. When she ventured to raise her eyes to the apprentice's face, she almost shrunk away from its expression. She had never before seen it show a shade of fierceness. She had seen it excited, animated, glowing — beaming with softness, and brightened, at times, by a tenderer impulse still ; but there was now a dark intensity in the eye, a stern contraction on the brow, and an eagerness in the half-opened lips, that spoke rage and vengeance in eloquent but appalling tokens.

The apprentice caught the raised movement of Theresa's look, and saw the involuntary shock with which it instantly sank again. The whole expression of his countenance instantly changed. A smile and a glance of gentle resolution mingled together ; and, quietly placing the paper in the breast of his doublet, he said, in an under tone, —

“ Fear not. This may mean nothing ; but it must not be despised. What it threatens I may not yet divine ; but I will watch over and protect thee. Say nought of this. It might alarm thy father ; and, mayhap, thus lead him into self-betrayal. All must be well for thee, Theresa. Heaven stands 'twixt thee and evil.”

These soothing words, and the tone and look which accompanied them, sank into our heroine's heart, and stilled its apprehensions.

CHAPTER X.

THE remainder of this day passed over somewhat similarly to the last; and at an earlier hour than on the preceding night Van Rozenhoed, and those of whom he was the political as well as parental patriarch, retired to rest. Nicholas Zannekin shrunk away the first, complaining that he was ill, and being an ill-looking confirmation of his complaint. The apprentice, as he rose from the supper table, and respectfully attended the ladies to the foot of the great stair leading to the corridor where their bedrooms were situated, took occasion to whisper, close to Theresa's ear, —

“ Depend on me, in whatever may occur. Have no doubt, let appearances be what they may. I am wholly devoted to your service, and will watch your safety.”

Theresa raised her eyes full upon his face, and she saw there, by the light of the lamp which the servant carried, the same expression of deep sincerity which had so powerfully impressed itself on her mind during their short interview in the garden the night of the fête at Rozenhoed House. But how differently did she read this countenance now! Then, its effect was like that mixture of delight and doubt produced by an interesting picture seen for the first time. Now, every line, every tint, every shadow, was familiar and dear to her. She knew them all by heart.

“ While you are near me, I have no fears for myself. I am only apprehensive for my father, and——” for you she would have added, but the words trembled on her lips. The imagination of the apprentice caught them ere they died entirely away, and conveyed them into the reservoir of his own deep passion. Nothing more was spoken; but an exchange of looks revealed to the self-taught lovers so many volumes of that love which only such as they can comprehend.

The next morning Van Rozenhoed was early prepared for the important business of the day. To his enquiries after the syndic, he received from him a verbal communication that he was too ill to leave his bed, and that he must therefore decline accompanying the deputation to the palace. The burgomaster, scarcely sorry to lose the presence of the timid syndic, imme-

diately sent to require that of his apprentice and secretary. Jans Broeklaer's answer was, that on seeking Master Boonen in his chamber, he was not to be found, and that from the state of his bed, it was clear he had not occupied it the last night ; nor did any of the inhabitants of the hostel know aught of his movements from the time of his quitting the supper table.

"Aha ! is it so ?" said the burgomaster, in half audible soliloquy : "a sly gallant ! the deeper the river the smoother the stream, saith the old proverb. But the boy is young, and we must not betray this little peccadillo to his reverence the prior. I hope *his* constant prayers and the blessing of Saint Andrew hover over us to-day ! Jans, let Master Boonen attend me the moment of his return to the hostel. And mind you, remark nought of his sleeping abroad to your young mistress or Madame Marguerite. It is not necessary to excite curiosity or awaken scandal, the two main failings of the sex."

"I hope this Master Boonen has not done both already," muttered Jans, who had his own reasons for what he said.

Breakfast passed over, noon arrived, dinner was served up and despatched, the members of the deputation gathered in groups at this rendezvous where their leader awaited them, the carriages were ordered, all was ready for departure towards the palace — but yet the apprentice came not.

"Never fear, my dear father, do not doubt him, he is the soul of honour and fidelity—I vouch for him !" exclaimed Theresa, as Van Rozenhoed impatiently paced the private chamber occupied by her and Madame Marguerite, while the chief saloon was filled by the Bruges deputies whom the burgomaster had quitted for awhile in order to consult his daughter, or rather to vent his suspicions to her on the subject of the apprentice's absence.

"Methinks you answer boldly for the youth, Theresa ; more boldly than mayhap beseems a maiden of eighteen."

"Nay, chide me not, father ; care for thy well-being gives me energy, but do not call it boldness. He cannot fail thee at a time like this."

"Indeed, Theresa, love," said Madame Marguerite, "thou art indiscreet to give the warrant of thy word for a man, particularly for one not highly born—that is to say, of positively mean descent. Now the Boonens, though respectable folk,

have no claims to birth. In truth, the only one of them at all known in heraldry is Barbara Boonen, and that in right of her husband Peter Peckins, the late Chancellor of Brabant; and the only existing person of the name of any note is James Boonen, abbot of Avordale, who they say is likely to be archbishop of Louvain."

"Tell me, Theresa," said Van Rozenhoed, who had keenly watched Theresa's countenance, while Madame Marguerite spoke, — "tell me, on what authority do you so warmly guarantee the fidelity of this young man?"

"On that of your friend, my confessor, his own uncle the prior," replied Theresa, in an animated tone.

"Umph! His reverence recommended this Lambert to you then?"

"Oh yes! most strongly, as a stanch and steady friend, — as his second self."

"Indeed! and have you no further pledge for him?"

"I have, I have, my father. One stronger still — his own word. His solemn promise to be near me in this day of danger."

"Of danger, child! What mean you?"

"What I can conceal no more from you, my father, even though *he* cautioned me against alarming you by what may, after all, mean nothing. Here, read this, and be on your guard, as Lambert — as Master Boonen is absent, and you must meet the peril for awhile without his aid. I cannot longer keep from you what I have already shown to him."

"Why, this *is* strange, indeed! What may it mean? Whence comes it?"

Theresa told the manner in which she became possessed of the paper which she had handed to her father.

"And hadst thou no qualms, Theresa, in showing to this youth a scroll which designated such a one as he is for a lover of such as thou art?"

"His lover! What do you say, kinsman? Lover! Heaven and the saints forbid! A Boonen make love to a Van Rozenhoed — to say nothing of a Lovenskerke! Oh, shocking! What is all this mystery? What danger threatens us?" rapidly exclaimed Madame Marguerite, closely hugging Fanchon in her arms.

"Sir," said Theresa, heedless of her kinswoman's apos-

trophes and questions, "I had all the feelings stirring in my breast which modesty might engender and pride acknowledge. But duty towards you, and charity towards him, prompted the course I took, and which my conscience does not condemn."

"My child, I blame thee not," said the burgomaster, at once satisfied and softened by the high bearing of his daughter. "Besides, there is no time now to lose in vain discussions; I must be prompt and resolute. I know not what hangs over me. Let me be cautious too as far as may be. The influence this young man has so soon gained over you was partly submitted to by me; I trusted all to him. Heaven grant him honest. Papers of vast importance, enough, Theresa, to involve thy father's safety and to commit his life, are in the keeping of this youth. Let me hasten to search his chamber, and see that they are safe."

With these words Van Rozenhoed stepped across the corridor of the chamber occupied by his apprentice, while Theresa stood fixed in speechless anxiety. Madame Marguerite walked up and down, loquaciously holding forth, in a mixture of mysterious dread and violent indignation, at the doubly hinted danger and dishonour to herself, her friends, her family, and Fanchon. The burgomaster returned in a few minutes, empty handed, and said in a low and gloomy tone, —

"Not one line is left. I have opened his valisse, he has taken all."

Theresa felt her cheeks grow chill as the breath of fear sucked their bloom away.

"I am wholly in this young man's power; but it is now too late to recede. Perhaps I wrong him," said the father.

Theresa would have said, "You do," could she have commanded the utterance of even two short words. But she was dumb — not from doubt of Lambert's honour, but from fear for his safety. The danger might have reached him the first; and instead of being employed in watching over her and her father's fate, he might at the moment have sunk under that with which the scroll had threatened him.

"Might not this warning have been written by himself? By him have been dexterously placed within thy hand?" said the burgomaster.

Theresa felt a new shock — but still it was not doubt. She

remembered the look that was excited by Lambert's perusal of the billet; and, in the double confidence of purity and love, she never imagined that even a look like that might be assumed.

"May not all this have been worked up, to turn suspicion from him? Can he have entered my house and crept into my confidence, to destroy the father the easier to gain his child?"

"Oh, father, father," exclaimed Theresa, a burst of passionate tears flowing with the words, "what monstrous thoughts are these! How can you let your mind be warped at a time like this, when every faculty and feeling should be steady and secure? If falsehood threatens you, be prepared for it, but deem not that it lurks in the breast of honour's self. On my part be at least assured I will not quit thee for an hour. I will go with thee to this counsel, will stand beside thee in the perilous task thou hast undertaken, and if the danger is to be met even at the foot of the archdukes' throne, there even will I brave it with thee, in spite and in defiance of treachery and tyranny both."

"My dearest child, my own Theresa!" cried the burgo-master, clasping her in his arms, "nothing can harm thy angel purity; but thou shalt run no risk that prudence may avert. Thou shalt accompany me, not to the foot of the throne, for that thou canst not do; but to the palace, to the antechamber of the council-room thou mayst come; and there, in thy domino and montero hat, in the character of my secretary, which another should have filled, thou shalt wait the issue of our conference with our imperious masters, in the safe care of faithful Jans Broeklaer."

"Oh, father!" interrupted Theresa, as a pang of recollection and conviction shot athwart her brain. The listening scene she witnessed on the memorable night of the fête rose full before her, and not a shade of doubt remained as to the source of the danger in which her father was enveloped. But before she could utter another word, loud calls for the burgo-master burst from his impatient friends; the trumpets of departure sounded from the guard of honour sent from the palace to escort the deputation; the chimes from the great clock sounded the quarter which preceded the hour of two; and Van Rozenhoed's firmness and courage rose with the approach of the longed-for scene.

"Hurry on thy cloak and hat, Theresa," cried he. "Come on, come on, my girl! All this may be but fancy, playing us some wild freak. Lambert may still appear. Let's not anticipate evils that may never exist. But be it as it may, nothing must shake me now. Farewell, Madame Marguerite! We shall soon return to you. Be of good cheer for an hour, and be ready to hail us with kind greeting. Now then, my child, away."

With these words he hastened down the broad stone staircase of the hostel, and was in a few minutes seated in his carriage, his pretended secretary at his side, and the whole procession in full departure for the palace. The sight was striking and impressive. In addition to the display for the yesterday's drive, already detailed, were now to be added the presence of upwards of twenty members of the deputation, following in double files, on horses richly caparisoned, the burgomaster's carriage. Each cavalier was followed by his varlet on foot; and both master and domestics were habited in the most costly and showy suits of their various wardrobes. The dress worn by Van Rozenhoed was particularly splendid. His doublet was of dove-coloured mohair, richly worked with gold and silver lace. His pourpoint of gold brocade, his mantle of green velvet, lined with cloth of gold, and bordered with several rows of gold lace and points of green and flame-coloured silk; while a row of pearls garnished its collar, which was fastened by a diamond agraffe. A frill of the finest Mechlin lace hung low on his neck. His green velvet cap was shaded by a profusion of ostrich plumes, and the remainder of his suit was in keeping with the parts already described. The other proud Flemings attempted no rivalry with this surpassing display; but they were all attired in the style of ostentatious expense for which their city had ever been famous.

The States General of Brabant and Flanders were at that epoch assembled in Brussels, having been just then called together by the archdukes, to discuss the critical circumstances of the country, and furnish the supplies which a continuance of the war with Holland so largely required. They were composed of the wealthiest nobles of the different districts still under the domination of Spain; and they formed a parody on representative government in perfect keeping with the mockery.

of an independent state, such as these countries were assumed to be, under the delegated sovereignty of Albert and Isabella. The chief business of such a parliament was to meet now and then, and vote as they were ordered ; to attend the court, and amuse themselves as best they might. The occasion presented by the Bruges deputation was not to be lost on the main body of these political automatons ; and they almost to a man assembled in the court-yard and outer lobbies of the palace to witness the approach of Van Rozenhoed and his friends.

The mixture of costumes of these provincialists was highly picturesque. The Flemings chiefly wore velvet mantles of the gaudiest colours and richest bindings, with caps of the same, or of silk, garnished with plumes. The deputies from Antwerp, and those parts which bordered on Holland, were distinguished by their black suits, their formal ruffs, slouched grey hats, boots of untanned leather, and the hanging sleeves of their short cloaks. The nobles of Hainault and Brabant were remarkable among the rest for their bold and warlike air, and the mingled lightness and good taste of their attire ; and not a few realised the description given by Roger Ascham of the English gallants of those days, whose pride was " to beare a brave looke, to weare a slovenlie buskin ; as though out of everie haire toppe should suddainlie starte a good bigge oath."

Not a few Jesuits and inquisitors, in their gloomy robes, were sprinkled among the different groups, through which they glided in silence, listening to catch some stray expression of political or sectarian heresy.

Within the more private precincts of the court, the archdukes, the ministers, the secret council, and all the subordinate hangers-on of royalty, offered a wide contrast to those without. Albert and Isabella, not content with the essentials of decorum and morality, of which they set a sincere example, had hedged themselves round in entrenchments of Spanish reserve and etiquette, that threw a sombre and hypocritical air on all within the palace walls, irksome to the courtiers and revolting to the public.

Albert, who was son of the emperor Maximilian, and nephew of the odious tyrant, Philip the Second of Spain, whose daughter he had married, was a man of talent and virtue, but tainted with the bigotry and gloom of his royal patron, and of

his religion. In the field he was a valiant and enterprising captain. In his five years' government of Portugal, he had proved himself a profound politician; and when he entered on his sovereignty of the Netherlands, and resolved on marriage, he renounced and solemnly deposed his cardinal's hat (with which, though not a priest, he had been invested at the age of nineteen,) on the altar of the Virgin, at Halle, near Brussels. Notwithstanding these tokens of a vigorous mind, he strictly adhered to the contemptible forms with which Christianity was defaced, and was deeply infected with the spirit of persecution which defiled it. In manner he was cold, haughty, and taciturn, and consequently unpopular. His wife was undoubtedly a superior character; for possessing in a high degree his virtues, and almost all his masculine attributes, she mingled with them a suavity and grace that secured, with the respect due to her dignity and esteem for her qualities, feelings of warm and general affection.

Van Rozenhoed's carriage advanced with some difficulty up the steep and ill paved street which ran half way up the hill of Caudenberg, afterwards called, in its finished state, the Montagne de la Cour, on the ascent of which the palace of the governors of Brabant was situated; and it stopped at a low arched doorway in the northern side of the building, which still may be seen, decorated by a mutilated figure in relief of St. George and his equally headless and immortal dragon, in a small square niche close by. It was by this door that such deputations were admitted; the larger portal, higher up the hill (and still existing), being reserved for the entry of monarchs, ambassadors, and the members of the States General. A narrow stair admitted to a range of corridors and galleries communicating with the state apartments; but all of these that escaped the great fire which destroyed the body of the building, in 1731 are now occupied — *sic transit gloria palatii* — as store-houses for a wine dealer, and an ironmonger's shop! while the very wall of the building (the height and solidity of which gives a good notion of what the imposing mass must once have been) is hidden from the view of the unexploring passenger by a row of insignificant houses, that disfigures and makes dangerous the main approach to the splendid square which crowns the summit of the hill.

The deputation was soon in the antechamber of the palace;

and passed successively on, through sundry saloons and cabinets, to the very verge of the council-room. Van Rozenhoed's courage rose with each new impediment which court formalities placed in the way of plain speaking and direct justice; and he and his companions, to whom he imparted much of his own spirit, felt no small contempt for the solemn fopperies or gloomy insolence of the many functionaries who obstructed their path.

"Well, my friends," exclaimed the burgomaster, in Flemish, as the last of the ushers, grooms, and chamberlains, left them at the innermost entrance of their final halting place, and went in to announce their attendance,—“well, my friends! who would exchange the honest independence of a Flemish burgher for all the trumpery parade of these Spanish dons? But cheer up; this may be our last appearance in this character, and on such a stage.”

The deputies received this speech with a smile, and exchanged significant and self-satisfied looks with each other. It produced exactly the same effect on the countenances of two inquisitors, who stood close by the entrance to the council-room. Van Rozenhoed had taken them for Spaniards, and he was right; but he had not considered the probability of their understanding the language in which he spoke, which they did, however, perfectly.

The chamberlain now returned, and loudly called for the burgomaster, eschevins, and other deputies of Bruges, to enter the presence-chamber, and present the petition on behalf of their fellow-citizens. Upon this call Van Rozenhoed put himself at the head of the others, and moved forwards; first giving an affectionate glance at Theresa, who sat down trembling on a chair presented by an attendant, as her father pointed her out to the chamberlain as the secretary of the deputation, and requested that fitting accommodation of writing materials might be afforded in case of necessity. A stiff bow of assent answered this demand, and the deputation moved on.

The door opened into a large and lofty hall, divided in the centre by a screen of carved oak, with huge folding doors, which expanded wide from the ceiling to the floor, and back to the walls at either side. The first division of this spacious apartment was covered with tapestry. Ranged in lines down the centre were the royal halberdiers in gaudy uniforms, with

a double row of courtiers of different grades in the service of the archdukes, who had assembled, some from duty, some from curiosity, to witness the scene. In the vista beyond this long avenue of heads and beards, Van Rozenhoed's eyes fixed upon the throne which was placed at the farthest end of the inner compartment of the hall ; and there he saw, seated in his robes of state, the somewhat diminutive person of Albert, and in her place beside him was she who was in every sense of the word his better half. The throne, like the chamber in which it stood, was hung with black velvet ; which, added to the gravity of the archduke's countenance, and those of the council of state, who took their tone and air from him, gave a peculiarly sombre effect to the whole scene. The council table was in front of the throne ; and the personal appearance and ermined robes of the members, who occupied low stools at either side of it, were congenial to the harsh and gloomy combination presented equally by men and things. The council was almost entirely composed of Spaniards. Francisco di Mendoza, admiral of Arragon, particularly odious at that time for his recent cruelties in the invasion of the neutral German states, was conspicuous by his haggard and ferocious look. Gonzalez Carillo, Baptista Tassis, and Zeronimo Zaputa were the other chief members of the government ; and there were, besides, La Barlotte, a fierce Walloon, notorious for his violent and enterprising spirit, with a few of more or less importance to the state.

As the chamberlain advanced between the files of courtiers, announcing the title of Van Rozenhoed, who followed at a few paces distance, the latter, with an apparently careless air (but as the observers shrewdly suspected designedly), laid hold of the collar of his own mantle and shook it, as if to arrange it more commodiously on his shoulders. As he did so, the string by which the row of pearls was fastened gave way, and the precious ornaments fell scattered on the floor, and rolled at the feet of the courtiers who had been gazing with admiration on the burgomaster's rich apparel. Several of them stooped and picked up a number of the pearls, which they offered, with an overstrained politeness, to their owner. But he returning their complaisance by a stretch of arrogance full as affected as extravagant, entreated that each would retain for himself the gems so courteously restored, "as a poor token of

a Flemish goldbeater's sense of the honour they had so done him." While all were struck with astonishment at this munificent proposal, and before the individual traits of avarice, pride, or generosity had time to prompt the courtiers to accept, reject, or render an equivalent for the proffered gifts, Van Rozenhoed moved on, followed by his friends, each of whom felt the full influence of this haughty profusion. When they all arrived close to the council table, and stood in front of the throne, they presented a spectacle of evident wealth and pride, that could not fail to produce a powerful effect on all present, from the monarchs down to the door-keepers.

It was signified to Van Rozenhoed that their highnesses were ready to hear his complaints; and as he bowed with due reverence, and prepared to speak, the folding doors were closed, and all excluded from the audience but the official attendants. It would therefore ill beseem us to render minutely public the details of the burgomaster's accusation against Trovaldo, and the archduke's brief reply; particularly as neither are of any great importance to the progress of our tale. Official memorials and answers have been, in all times and countries, pretty nearly the same. The petitioners and the prince have their parts assigned, and know their speeches by rote; and those in question differed in no essential from their prototypes. It is enough to say, that Van Rozenhoed clearly and resolutely explained the griefs complained of by the city of which he was the organ; and that Albert, with rigid dignity, promised enquiry and justice, according to the laws whose distributor he was. The archdukes then rose from their seats, and retired to an adjoining apartment, followed by the members of the council; while Van Rozenhoed and his friends, in increasing spirits as their work proceeded, withdrew in the order they had advanced, as the folding doors opened again to allow their progress.

But a very pleasing change of scenery met their view as they passed on to the outer compartment of the hall. A table had been prepared with great celerity and perfect silence, loaded with a costly collation of fruits, conserves, confectionery, wine, and cordials. More than twenty covers were placed on the board, being one for each member of the deputation; and a cloth-covered bench was placed at each side, the luxury of high backed chairs being not even then in common use for the

ordinary accommodation. Cushions, however, were rarely dispensed with; and Van Rozenhoed's pride and eye being both quickened to the observance of small slights by the ceremonious honours done to him in the palace, he was resolved to give a new instance of his spirit to the courtiers who still lingered in the hall, and the numerous official persons who attended at the repast. This was presided by the Marquess of Assembourg, the senior of the score of *hoofrednaers*, or hereditary receivers of the revenues attached to the household of the archdukes, as successors to the counts of Flanders, by whom these feudal offices were instituted. When this venerable placeman requested Van Rozenhoed and his friends to be seated, the burgomaster, giving a significant gesture to the rest, unclasped the diamond fastening of his cloak and laid the magnificent garment on the bench, and sat down on it, unmindful of the injury it sustained. The others, with more or less compunction, followed his example, and thus gave a tacit reproof to the want of consideration with which they thought proper to feel themselves treated. The chief functionary,² taking possession of his round stool at the head of the table, either did not understand or chose to pass unnoticed this arrangement of his guests; nor was it remarked by his well-bred and noble associates, the hereditary "butler," "cellar-man," "master of the pantry," and the rest, who aided their chief in doing the honours of the board.

Long ere the deputies had rendered a Flemish account of the repast, Van Rozenhoed was satisfied, anxiety to be again with Theresa, and to communicate to her his distinguished treatment overcoming his appetite. As soon as a fitting time of ceremony had elapsed, he arose from table; and after an exchange of compliments with the functionaries before mentioned, he and his companions prepared to follow their old leader the chamberlain, the Marquess of Assembourg formally and consequentially saying,—

"The burgomaster and citizens of the good town of Bruges having received the honours due to their station, and the ordinary rites of hospitality, at the hands of our sovereign lieges the archdukes, their further care and treatment, as seems good to their highnesses, is confided to the marshal of the palace."

A final bow of acknowledgment was made by the elated burgomaster; and he led the way towards the door, uttering a

few rapid words in Flemish, which his companions clearly understood and approved of; for they to a man took their cue from him, and each left his mantle on the seat where they had so indifferently used them. Upon seeing this, a solemn titter ran through the files of courtiers, who imagined the deputation to be so agitated by their contact with the court as to have forgotten the costly cloaks which they thus abandoned. One of the hoofrednaers, the youngest of the party, and the court fop *par excellence*, stalked after the deputies; and stroking his infant beard with one hand, he tapped Van Rozenhoed on the shoulder with the other, and said with solemn gravity, in French, although the Spanish language was spoken chiefly at court, "If the right worshipful burgomaster and his most worthy fellow-citizens may, without offence, be deemed capable of a lapse of memory, I should make bold to say that such has occurred to them at present, in the circumstance of their having (in a perhaps not unnatural abstraction) forgotten to resume the splendid outward coverings which they whilome sat upon on yonder benches."

"Sir," answered Van Rozenhoed, in portly pride, and in the same language in which he was addressed, "the burghers of Bruges can least of all forget what is due to their own dignity. They never condescend, when retiring from a feast, to carry away the cushions they have reposed on."

CHAPTER XI.

AFTER the delivery of the retort, which has been since celebrated in the pages of more than one historian, Van Rozenhoed strode towards the door; and he could not resist throwing an enquiring glance around, to mark the effect produced by his words.

He observed, instead of the profound respect he reckoned on, a general expression of irony on the faces of the courtiers; and in those of the two inquisitors who had mingled with the rest, he read as many not to be mistaken documents of malignant delight. Their sinister looks made him shudder; but his heart fearlessly rose up to meet the doubt that seemed to

press on it, and he passed with a firm step into the ante-chamber where he had left Theresa an hour before. His searching eye rested upon her cloak-wrapped form, in the same place in which he had deposited her, the cap, which hung designedly low on her brow, having effectually concealed her features. He was advancing towards her, and she simultaneously rising to meet him, when they were prevented from an exposure of feeling, which the callous corruption of a court would have seen to be ridiculous, by the sudden bursting open of a door opposite to the one which led to the presence-chamber, and the entrance of a ruffian-looking officer, armed cap-a-pee, followed by a rush of armed men. The officer, stepping fiercely up, placed himself between the father and daughter, and laying a hand on the shoulder of each, he exclaimed, in Flemish, —

“ I, Gerard Abramzoon, deputy-marshal of the palace, arrest you, Zhegher van Rozenhoed, and you, Lambert Boonen, on charge of treason against the state. Guards, lead them away ; and you all, other citizens of Bruges, are also my prisoners, compromised as accomplices in the crime of the chief conspirators.”

Van Rozenhoed was utterly overthrown by this shock. Notwithstanding Theresa's warning, the apprentice's desertion, and the syndic's abandonment, the blow seemed to meet him wholly unprepared. With the usual fatuity of temperaments naturally brave and sanguine, all these indications of danger were forgotten or disregarded ; and he had held his course in inflated elevation till the storm gathered round him in the atmosphere which seemed the purest, and the bolt struck him in the very midst of sunshine. He heard his own name pronounced, coupled with the charge of treason : he felt the marshal's gauntlet rest heavily on his shoulder ; he stood for a moment aghast ; and was awoke to the true sense of his situation by the soldiers seizing his sword, and dragging him forward. At the same moment, two other of these myrmidons laid hold of Theresa, and hurried her towards the door. She did not for an instant lose her presence of mind ; her heart was too full to afford a place to fear. She was influenced by the hope of being left with her father, and that of successfully personating Lambert Boonen, and giving him more time for escape. She therefore silently rose and ap-

proached Van Rozenhoed, to whisper a word or two of encouragement and caution in his ear. But his eye no sooner caught her figure than the parent's feeling overcame the feelings of the man; he shook away the weakness that had for a moment paralysed him, and clasped his daughter in his arms, exclaiming, in broken accents, —

“My child, my child! the blow is already struck — the hour is come. What have I done? how have I risked thy safety? who now is to protect thee? O what a guilty wretch I am!”

“Take down his words,” muttered an inquisitor; “he confesses his guilt.”

“What does he mean?” cried Abramzoon; “his child! have we not here his secretary, the traitor Boonen?”

“Yes, yes,” said Theresa, wrapping her cloak still closer round her, “I am Lambert Boonen. He calls me his child from affection. Away, away! take us to our prison.”

“Child or secretary, man or woman — for your voice and your size make it doubtful which — you are at any rate my prisoner; but you do not accompany the honest burgomaster: he goes to the Halle-gate — you to the Amigo*,” said the deputy-marshal.

“Oh, no no! we must go together — one dungeon will serve us both — you cannot, must not part us,” sobbed Theresa, in imploring tones.

“Away with them, nor let their highnesses' rest be disturbed by this tumult!” fiercely cried the marshal, and the soldiers again laid hands on Theresa, when Van Rozenhoed, his hardy spirit recovering from its first shock, and roused to desperation, grasped one of the rude arms that had seized hers, and dashing the ruffian aside, he called aloud, —

“Release her! At your peril touch her not again! It is a woman, it is my daughter you would seize!” and to stop the rising brutality of the soldiers and their chief, he tore open the mantle that Theresa grasped with both hands; and he next flung her cap from her head with such force, that her beautiful tresses fell round her face and far down her shoulders, and she stood confessed in all the exquisite graces of womanhood and beauty.

* The chief prisons of Brussels in those days: the former still exists, a frightful monument of deep suffering and bad taste.

"Now, ye tools of tyranny, do ye believe your own eyes?" continued the exasperated father. "And you, reverend instruments of bigotry, who disgrace the creed ye preach, and that I revere, what do ye say to this? Will you drag a parent from his child, and leave a being like that the victim of treachery and power?"

"Away with him!" vociferated Abramzoon — "let the damsel remain!" and several of the soldiers violently separated Van Rozenhoed from Theresa's embrace, and dragged him on.

"Oh! men of Bruges," cried he, "must this be borne? Are your strong arms unnerved, and your bold hearts frozen? Can ye see this sight and stand still? Rescue! — rescue!"

Roused from their stupified inaction by this appeal, the deputies gathered round, and several of them, as yet not disarmed, drew their swords, and pushed through the halberdiers.

"Soldiers, do your duty! Down with these rebel dogs! Cut them down every man, but spare the girl!" hoarsely cried the marshal; and in a moment more, rapiers and pikes were clashing, and three or four combatants on either side had measured their length on the floor. During the preceding altercation several of the courtiers had crowded in from the hall and presence-chamber; but now that matters had actually come to blows, the greater part of these rapidly retreated, and were met by others rushing from the penetralia of the palace, into the very heart of which the uproar had entered. Among the latter was the old Marquess of Assembourg, who well knew the catastrophe that was preparing for his quondam guests at the very time he was pledging their healths in treacherous bumpers. He was now despatched to see if the work was consummated; and on entering the anteroom, which presented a scene of violence and blood, he loudly proclaimed peace in the name of the archdukes, who were, he avowed, within hearing of this outrageous affray. But his proclamation had been unattended to, had not overwhelming reinforcements of the guard succeeded in disarming and securing every member of the deputation.

Theresa, who had clung to her father, and saved him by the sacredness of the female form from the brandished weapons of the soldiers, no sooner saw that the frantic attempt of her

friends was quelled, and the way cleared for the performance of a sudden resolution, than she sprang across the floor, through the entrance to the great hall, and rushing unobstructed past the astonished groups that were scattered in the presence-chamber, she never stopped till she reached the archduchess in the private room beyond ; where she no sooner beheld her, surrounded by a number of men, whom she knew not nor cared for, than she threw herself on her knees, and convulsively caught the princess's robes.

" Mercy, mercy !" exclaimed she, " mercy for my father ! Oh ! save him, save him ! They drag him away to ignominy and death ! I call on you, as a woman, not to shut your heart to my cry for mercy !"

Had an angel dropped from heaven, the faces of those present could not have shown greater signs of astonishment and admiration. But even if the miracle had been such, the courtiers would, as in the present case, have restrained every verbal expression of their feelings, until they were quite satisfied as to those of the sovereigns. Albert, who stood close to his wife, looked little moved, but rapidly asked who the young person was. Nobody could answer the question ; but Isabella, following the kind impulse of her heart, waited for no reply ; but raising Theresa up, she graciously smiled, and mildly but firmly said, —

" Be composed, child !—be you or your father who ye may, have no fears of violence. I promise you protection for yourself, and justice for him."

" Oh, madam, they drag him this moment to his dungeon ! Let *me* go there as well — 'tis all I ask ; but do not part us ! Oh ! come, I beseech, I implore you, come, and see that they do him no harm."

The archduchess, gently resisting Theresa's efforts to lead her from the room, spoke again, with increasing benevolence and animation, —

" You ask impossibilities, child ; but I swear to you, by the honour of a princess, and the faith of a Christian woman, your father shall suffer no wrong ! Your highness," added she, turning towards Albert, " confirms my orders ?"

Albert, by expressive gestures, gave his full assent ; and at the moment the Marquess of Assembourg entered and reported that the refractory burghers were all secured.

"Then go, Don Zeronimo Zaputa," resumed Isabella, "attend in person to the treatment of these prisoners all, and see them honourably used. Who is your father, my fair maid?"

"The burgomaster of Bruges," replied Theresa, somewhat re-assured by the princess's manner, and by seeing the minister profoundly bow and hasten away in pursuance of her orders.

"What! are you then this celebrated heiress, this perverse maiden, who will not list the offers of alliance from nobles and gallant soldiers, but rather choose to lend an ear to the coarse addresses of base churls, heretics, and conspirators? We were half inclined to retract our promise of favour from so truant a suppliant, and so hard hearted withal to the sorrowful complaints of others."

Theresa, unacquainted with the bantering style of princes, took this speech at the letter, and felt her heart sink again as she said,—

"Oh, do not, madam, withdraw your protection from me. Take pity on me, and give me some hope in this hour of trial. That I am that hapless heiress is no fault of mine, and as for the rest, I am not, indeed I am not, hard hearted. They belie me to your highness, who say I am such; nor do these suitors merit kindness or compassion: they seek my wealth not my heart. Oh, let them take it all, so that my poor father is but safe, and I allowed to share his captivity and his danger, be it what it may."

"Well, well, cheer up, soothe these alarms," replied Isabella, in all her former kindness of accent and look—"you shall not be abandoned; and again I promise you, your father shall have impartial justice."

"Oh, but if justice be but another word for punishment? if——"

"Nay, nay, we cannot now discuss such critical points," said Isabella, seeing that the archduke was impatient of the scene, and that he was retiring to his private cabinet with some of the ministers—"time presses, and this affair that implicates your father is one of serious moment, more than perhaps you know of."

"Oh! no, madam, I know it all—all that my father or Master Lambert Boonen know. If they are guilty, so am I.

Let me share all my father's sufferings be they what they may ! Please Heaven, Master Boonen has escaped !”

These ingenuous revelations, of even more than Theresa intended to confess, at once amused and interested the arch-duchess.

“ So then, it appears,” said she, “ that the reports of this dangerous Master Boonen are not beyond the truth ? We must, I see, protect you against him.”

“ Against *him* ! Oh, Heavens, madam, how little do you know him ! He is my best friend—he would die for me !”

“ Live for you, rather, or much I doubt me. But no more of him. Your thoughts must turn from such ignoble churls. And mark me now, Theresa— young, artless, exposed to danger as you are, it is our duty, as our will, to cherish and protect you. Proofs of your father's treason are too evident to leave it in doubt. This secretary, or apprentice, or whatever he may be, is involved in all ; and much I grieve me to add, so is one whose duty to our holy faith and his own sacred calling should have kept him pure. The prior of St. Andrew's is, as thy father, a prisoner, detained in arrest in his own priory. This nephew of his, this Boonen, cannot long elude the active search of our officers, if, indeed, he be not already secured.”

A deep sigh from Theresa followed this climax of ill bodings.

“ Nay, sigh not, fair maiden,” continued the princess ; “ it is well to let you know the truth of your situation, that you may weigh the value of the remedy for all these ills. All the ramifications of this dark conspiracy are known to my august spouse and to myself through the zeal of our ministers and the fidelity of our servants. The most daring accomplice of these crimes, the old and bad De Bassenvelt, outlawed and proscribed, is on the eve of paying a terrible retribution ! We have heard much of your concerns of late. We know how you are beset by artful profligates ; but the care we owe to the children of the state includes all without distinction. We wish you well : nor do we feel disposed to punish with extremest rigour any but the base in mind and bad in heart. Your father comes not in that list ; and if you would at once join your duty to him with obedience to our will, an oblivious veil

may perhaps be drawn across his error, and all may yet be well."

"Oh, madam," cried the impatient girl, no longer able to restrain her anxious feelings,—"oh, tell me when, where, or how I may fly to obey the condition that can lead to such unhoped for happiness? I am ready on the instant!"

"Then stand aside, señors," cried the archduchess, in a lively and almost triumphant tone, to the ministers and official attendants who still remained in the room,— "stand aside, and let this lovely maiden see the path that leads to her own happiness and her father's freedom."

And at this command, the dark and dingy looking beings that had stood scowling, as Theresa thought, upon her, opened back to the right and left, and displayed to her view a person who had before kept out of sight, and whose handsome person and apparel showed a brilliant contrast to their gloom. At the first glance she did not recognise him; but a second told her it was no other than Lyderic de Roulemonde who stood revealed to her. Notwithstanding all his personal advantages, and what he reckoned on as powerful auxiliaries to them, namely, his many-coloured doublet embroidered in gold, his silk scarf with diamond aiguillettes, his fringe of silver points round skirts and knees, like the glass drops of a candelabra, and the other accessories of his dress, in spite of all, Theresa viewed him with inexpressible repugnance. Whether this was produced by the sinister expression of his eye, by the occasional impressions which had been made on her not unfavourable to his avowed rival De Bassenvelt, or by the still more powerful leaning towards Lambert Boonen, it is not easy to say. All, perhaps, combined together, and the effect was irresistible. Theresa felt faint and nervous as the archduchess beckoned Lyderic forward, and spoke as he advanced,—

"Advance, Baron de Roulemonde, and let this fair maid look on the alternative which, methinks, she may without shuddering adopt. Here, Theresa, here is the remedy for all. This brave, this virtuous baron, whose zeal for the state has discovered and broken up this vile confederacy into which your father has been entrapped, demands but one reward for his inestimable services. You are the only prize he looks for in life, and we have promised you to him. Placed near our person in a station of high honour, for such we destine you to,

you shall be the grace of our court, and the charm of all eyes. Your father shall be forgiven and taken high into our favour. His fortune shall be secure, his name not dishonoured, his reputation unsullied. And we promise, even before you ask the boon, to extend our pardon to the prior and his nephew, in whose fate I perceive you condescend to take some interest. Such are the terms we offer to you, as the means of felicity to yourself and others. We scarcely look for any demur or doubt on your part."

During this speech, Theresa endured a conflict of feelings we shall not attempt to describe. The reader, to whom her character must now be known, will perceive that Isabella had touched every spring that could move both its strong and weak points. It need not be stated here that the weaker (which ought to be the worser) often overpower the better, in such struggles. But it must not be inferred that that was exactly the case at present, from the fact of a new defect being at the moment engendered in our heroine's mind—at least a new evil, which severity itself will excuse, if it cannot quite approve. It was, in the plain sense of the term, hypocrisy; but in that modified form, which the conventional language (and we may add, the inevitable corruptions of society,) softens down and justifies under the term dissimulation. Had Theresa boldly and energetically said to the archduchess, "No; I reject your conditions—I dare the consequences—let my father and my friends all perish—let me be doomed to risk and ruin—I brave it all!" she might have appeared more sublime, and fitter for a state of stubborn, unclad veracity; but we hope she will not seem less amiable, and assuredly she was more natural, as but one of a system where not even thought goes naked, in suppressing her true feelings, and wearing an apparent consent to Isabella's proposition. She had, at any rate, no time for reflection; and she answered with a hesitation that it would not be fair to attribute entirely to deceit,—

"Your highness's proposal is one of great moment. I am sensible—deeply so—of the real condescension that can make you look from your high station on the fate of a person so humble as I am. But you will not refuse me a little time for reflection, for consultation with my father, on what so much involves him as well as me. I ask no more than to see him,

and communicate your highness's proposal and this gentleman's intentions."

"You are a prudent and sensible young person," said the archduchess, graciously, and not a little pleased with the tact by which she was convinced she had effected such submissive compliance in Theresa's mind; "your request is but reasonable, and a hastier answer would have been indelicate. You shall have all due consideration for your situation and feelings. Our worthy and gallant old friend and servant there, the Marquess of Assembourg, will take you in his charge. His house is hard by our palace, and in it you will find every suitable accommodation and care. And to prove to you that we have anticipated all these results, though your abrupt appearance here took us somewhat by surprise, you will find your kinswoman and chaperone already established in the marquess's house, with your own attendant and such of your father's household as he may not need in the secure retreat which it is necessary he should occupy for a while. Baron de Roulemonde here, will maintain a strict decorum in those visits, which, as your affianced husband, he will from time to time pay you. You are under my special guardianship till your nuptials are celebrated."

Theresa shuddered as the archduchess spoke. She was, for an instant, tempted to throw herself once more at her feet, and pray for mercy. But she maintained her presence of mind, bowed low, but spoke not. Lyderic advanced, dropped on one knee, and profoundly bent his body, an emblem of the crooked mind that prompted the servile movement. He rose again, took Theresa's shrinking hand in his, and pressed it to his lips; then raised his eyes—which, though well coloured and shaped, were eyes that never *beamed*—and threw a twinkling look of pleasure on what he made sure was now his prize.

After some further gracious expressions, meant to re-assure our heroine, the archduchess gave her over to the care of the Marquess of Assembourg, who led her away in all the tripping gallantry of a courtier of threescore; while Lyderic attended them with that air of flaunting courtesy, which the followers of royalty seem to catch as naturally as the sun-flower receives its gaudy bloom from the luminary towards which it so obsequiously turns. A carriage of the archduke's waited at the low portal by which the deputation had entered; and Theresa,

having passed shuddering through the scene of the late affray, which still showed its bloody marks, was handed into the vehicle by the old marquess, who placed himself at her side, and in a few minutes she was safely in his house.

In the mean time Van Rozenhoed and his friends had reached their several prisons. While he was led down from the antechamber, where the useless struggle he had provoked had taken place, and just as he was about to step into his own carriage, in which he was permitted to be conducted to the Halle-gate, a man, from the crowd that had been attracted round the place of entrance to the palace, put his head close, and whispered in the burgomaster's ear, —

“ Fear nought—be bold and firm. The papers are all destroyed. Your friends watch over you and Theresa both.”

Van Rozenhoed turned round: but the rapid movements of the crowd and the guards shifted the whole scenery of heads; and the nearest face which met his view was that of one of the inquisitors, gloating in villanous triumph over these new victims.

CHAPTER XII.

THE house to which Theresa was conducted by its noble owner is still one of the most curious monuments of domestic architecture in Brussels. Situated near the palace, on the north-east side of the hill of Caudenberg, and built chiefly of brick in the fashion of a still remoter day, it showed in its angles and many arches a mixture of stone-masonry of gothic style, which gave to the whole a mingled air of lightness and solidity. Its front, which looked towards the palace, was approached by an archway of granite, opening into a large court-yard and elevated garden; and close by there was a steep and almost impassable precipice, the immense body of the building bounding it all the way down at one side in a perpendicular mass of brickwork, pierced with sundry square windows. The back part of the mansion rose up in considerable height, from a narrow street leading towards the park, named after the Archduchess Isabella, in which were a few other isolated houses, but

which was then chiefly occupied by stables belonging to some noble families; and it was bounded at one side by the extensive gardens and practice-ground of the archers of St. Sebastian.

The whole neighbourhood was at that period wild and slovenly, but it has been long since thickly built upon. The house, which still exists almost perfectly, is hidden from view towards the front by those of the Montagne de la Cour, and the narrow street of St. Laurent. A broad flight of irregular and ill-paved steps have been inserted in the precipice above mentioned, leading down to the rear of the building, which is still strikingly remarkable, with its two oriel windows, and the sculptured escutcheons of the Assembourgs, standing out like prominent features from the face of the main wall.

The most considerable and most elevated of those projections belongs to a large chamber which at the time of our story was one of state, and as such was appropriated to the use of the marquess's fair guest or prisoner, whichever Theresa may be considered to have been. She, at least, looked on herself in the latter light, and took possession of her apartment with a heavy heart. She had the consolation of finding in it, on her arrival, Madame Marguerite and Nona; and of observing that the bed-rooms destined for them, as well as her own, opened each into this main chamber, which was lofty and gloomy, and little calculated to bring any comforting associations to the minds of its occupants.

Madame Marguerite seemed, however, to feel her situation not oppressively irksome. She had left the hostel, on the summons of an officer despatched from the minister Zaputa; and, without hearing more than general intimations that Van Rozenhoed was about to undergo some examination on matters of state, she cheerfully set out, under such high official auspices. Securing a soft place for Fanchon in the carriage that conveyed them, her anxieties, if she had any, soon sunk into a repose as sound as the lapdog's, on some corner cushion of her own downy disposition. She was surprised as much as shocked, when Theresa joined her in her new abode, to observe the evidences of recent agitation and present unhappiness, which our heroine made no effort to conceal. But all these appeared very unreasonable to her, when the polite explanation of the marquess, in whom she recognised an old acquaintance, told her that the arrest of her kinsman, and Theresa's removal to

his own protection, were adopted less from severity than from the tender care of the archduchess towards her young friend, for whom the most brilliant prospects were rapidly unfolding, and these he briefly but explicitly explained.

"Ah, marquess," exclaimed she, as the statement was finished, "how fortunate for this dear child to have excited the attention of her highness! and how all this reminds me of the last time I had the pleasure of meeting you, now approaching thirty years, alas! But time has touched you lightly, marquess. Were it not for a slight stoop o' the shoulders, a grizzled beard, a bald head, and the loss of your teeth, I might fancy you the same gay gallant you were the day the great deputation waited on our old governess, Marguerite of Parma, who, as you must remember, made the match at the masquerade, the same evening, between me and your poor friend the chevalier, my own cousin-german, with whom I was happily married the following Sunday, in the church of St. Gudule, near this very spot."

"Ay, well I remember it; and a happy season it was for the poor chevalier, rest his soul, amen!"

"Amen!" responded the good dame, her eyes streaming with tears, while the marquess continued, —

"For duly did we all, young fellows that envied his happiness, do homage to the lovely complexion, chestnut curls, and sylph-like form of his blooming bride. And, in sooth, I need not now draw deeply on memory to recall her; for were it not that wrinkles will steal upon the fairest skin, and crow's feet leave their stamp between the cheek and eye, and the loveliest tresses turn grey, and the lightest figures grow fat—were it not for these small tokens, but little would be required to make me see before me the blithesome dame Marguerite de Lovenskerke, who changed her state, but not her name, in wedding her own cousin Ralph."

With old reminiscences and complimentary speeches like these, in which, notwithstanding the good feeling of the speakers, a captious mind might trace some of the latent bitterness that lurks in the best natures, the marquess and Madame Marguerite contrived to while away the afternoon, until towards sunset, when preparations were commenced for the supper which the marquess had ordered for his fair guests, and which, with a gallant air, he requested the honour of being

permitted to partake. But there had been little in all this to interest Theresa. She had vainly asked permission of the marquess to visit her father in his prison. He declared it was as much as his place was worth to suffer her to quit his mansion without the special commands of the archduchess; and he intimated that the close examination of Van Rozenhoed by the officers of the state would make any communication for that day impossible. He, however, freely allowed Theresa to send one of the varlets of her father's establishment, who were ordered to attend her bidding, with a letter, informing him of her situation, and requesting to know the particulars of his. To this a verbal message was returned, stating that as soon as leisure allowed Van Rozenhoed to write, Theresa should have an ample answer, by the hands of his tried and trusty domestic, Jans Broeklaer.

Her cheeks turned pale at the thought of this man being still in his master's confidence; and she revolved in her mind a hundred expedients for warning her father of the treachery of which she was herself convinced. Absorbed in such thoughts, she paid little attention to the conversation of the marquess and Madame Marguerite, until it turned on subjects that never failed to interest her—the present state of the country, the proceedings of the patriots, and the revolt of De Bassenvelt.

“Ay, indeed is he a bold rebel, I assure you,” said the marquess, impressing a former observation on Madame Marguerite's attention. “Why it was but the day before yesterday——”

“Thursday, the 27th.”

“The day before yesterday.”

“The very day we arrived from Ghent.”

“Very likely, Madame Marguerite, very likely—nothing more so—but be the exactness of the date, or your particular circumstances or situation what they might, I repeat that it was the day before yesterday that this revolted count, mounted on his Arabian steed, in his black armour, blue scarf, and white-plumed helmet, and at the head of three or four hundred of his troopers, rode in defiance almost to the very ramparts of Brussels, and swept along through the villages of Ixelle and Etterbeeke, scarcely out of the range of our guns.”

“What a horrid wretch, marquess! How lucky we were,

riding quietly along, that we did not fall in with him and his odious band of rebels !”

“ It is indeed well for all that is virtuous and beautiful” (and here the marquess’s eyes turned from Madame Marguerite upon Theresa’s countenance) “ to escape the contact of so vile a libertine, for neither place nor person are secure against him.”

Theresa’s cheeks bore witness that her pride and resentment were aroused from their long slumber by these words.

“ And why, marquess,” asked Madame Marguerite, “ is the insolent creature allowed to beard the bravery of Brabant, here in the very seat of power ?”

“ Why, in truth, I must confess it, necessity disables us from chastising him just now. Our garrison scarcely affords a squadron of dragoons fit for service. Every disposable regiment has been sent off, under the Count de Berg, against Crevecoeur, St. Andrew’s, and the other revolted places. Welbasch Castle, the stronghold of this De Bassenvelt, is not yet attacked ; but preparations are making to concentrate and march against it a force which will soon drive the rebel back to his den, and then be sufficient to destroy him. The command is to be taken by your governor of Bruges, Trovaldo, who is better fitted to oppose a bold enemy in field or fortress, than to deal with boisterous burghers in a town. Your pardon, ladies, both ! I speak with no meaning of offence to the worthy citizens of Flanders. They, too, as we see, may be the dupes of designing rebels, such as this very youth De Bassenvelt, who, they say, has the cunning of the serpent with the bravery of the lion.”

“ Ah, marquess, and well he may, for his whole race were deep and desperate men. Without going back into times of darkness, we may be satisfied with the memory of his own father, Gabriel de Bassenvelt, whom I well recollect. Ay, he is before my eyes this moment, with his fierce and haughty look, when he came furious from the meeting of nobles at St. Trond, to join that very deputation of which I spoke erewhile, and of which you yourself formed one. When William of Nassau in all his greatness, and his gallant brother Louis, with De Brederode, St. Aldegond, and the other chiefs were thrown into the shade by De Bassenvelt’s bold bearing, when he took the word from them all, clapped his hand on his sword, and

swore that if the governess had been but a man, he would have cut her throat for the country's good."

"Your memory is indeed accurate, Madame Marguerite. These were his very words, recorded in his sentence."

"Yes, marquess, I heard him speak them, and shake his clenched fist the while. And well I remember, that when I and the other ladies in the comptroller's balcony, hung with tulip-flowered yellow arras, on the left-hand side of the hall, shrieked aloud, old Marguerite of Parma laughed and held her sides, and told De Bassenvelt that if she *were* a man she would have wrung his neck on his shoulders for his boldness."

"Ah, Madame Marguerite, men spoke their minds in those days, and women too. And well had it been for Count Gabriel he had confined himself to words."

"He was not the man for that, marquess, as well you know, and all the world knows, and as poor Maurice Kraft, the chamberlain, could tell the best of all, had not Count Gabriel struck him dead with one blow of his gauntlet on the temple, in the very palace court, when he reproached him with the affront he had offered to the governess."

"And for which blow he had paid the forfeit——"

"Ay, marquess, of his life, had they but caught him. But he was, like this rebel son of his, light of foot and quick of purpose; and he fled, no one knew where, leaving his only child an infant behind him. And it seems like yesterday that I heard John Spelleken, the hangman, with his black dress and his red wand in his hand, read aloud in the market-place the sentence of confiscation of Count Gabriel's estates and forfeiture of his titles, and his banishment for twenty-five years from all the states of the king, as the penalty of this murder. And truth to say, it struck upon me yesterday as an awful coincidence, when I saw the son of this same De Bassenvelt hang in effigy on the very spot, and heard the executioner read a sentence nearly the same which I had so long before heard pronounced against the father."

"Most awful it is to see wickedness descend like an heirloom from generation to generation!" replied the marquess, throwing up his hands and eyes, which had been all until that moment busily employed in selecting and serving the nicest morsels of the excellent supper. "But these," continued he, "are doleful subjects for your beautiful young kinswoman

here. I see, by her expressive countenance, that she ill brooks the mention of those guilty men."

"Excuse me, marquess," said Theresa, starting, "my thoughts are with my father; my anxiety urges me to ask you the particulars of the charges against him, and of the traitor who has denounced him."

"Traitor he is, in the double sense of the word, young lady. And though his name is not given to the public, it is confidentially communicated to us of the archdukes' intimacy. I cannot however keep you ignorant of this secret enemy, as you may now be considered of the princess's train, and consequently one of us. It is, then, one Claassen who has denounced his worship the burgomaster of Bruges. And little better could be expected from a factious follower of false lights, a Calvinistic tanner, than treason first and treachery after."

"Ah, then, my father's misgivings were too true! It was jealousy that drove Claassen to this!"

"They say so, indeed," said the marquess, with a smile; "but still I marvel, in that case, how the young tanner could have joined to betray one rival, this Boonen whom they seek, and ensure to the Baron de Roulemonde the very object the love of which—nay, blush not, fair young lady—has driven him almost mad. It is, in fact, an intricate affair, and full of mystery."

Theresa, confounded by the mixture of conjectures that crowded on her at this conflicting information, could only repeat the words,—

"The *young* tanner!"

"Ay, lady, if two and twenty may be called so, in these precocious times."

"Why, was it, could it be *young* Claassen, that has spread this web of danger for me and mine? my suspicions fixed on the father."

"Lady, he *is* young, and named Renault by baptismal rites. I saw him with these eyes this very day; and a miserable conscience-stricken object he looked."

"He is *here*, in Brussels, then?"

"Ay, lady, is he—the denouncer of your father, and the companion of your affianced lord, Lyderic Baron de Roulemonde."

"Can such baseness be—can Renault Claassen have done

this!" mentally exclaimed Theresa. But she suffered no further expression to pass her lips. The various links of a long chain of thought were rapidly run through; and the main ones were those that connected the conviction of Jans Broeklaer's treachery, with the information now given of that of Renault Claassen; and she remembered well how on several occasions the former had, in his privileged loquacity as an old and confidential servant, dilated on the merits of the latter, in a way that seemed now to account for their complicity, had the object been to gain her for Renault Claassen; but that he should become an agent of infamy to secure her for De Roulemonde seemed inexplicable.

It was nightfall ere Theresa's anxiety relative to her father was relieved by the announcement that Jans Broeklaer waited in the hall below with a letter and the remainder of Theresa's clothes, and some other articles left behind in the sudden removal from the hostel, and now placed at the disposal of the owners by the commissary appointed by Don Zeronimo Zapata, and who accompanied these things to witness their delivery and take a receipt for them.

To Theresa's animated request that the servant might be instantly admitted, the marquess gave his ready consent. She forgot for the moment her repugnance to the messenger, in consideration of his errand, and rose to meet him at the door; but she started back, forcibly repelled, on discovering at a glance, through his disguise, that the pretended commissary was no other than Renault Claassen; and as to Jans Broeklaer, who had no disguise whatever, she could nevertheless scarcely recognise him. He carried on his shoulder one of those huge baskets of strong but light wicker-work, with clasps and locks, which generally served the purposes of travelling trunks at that period, when sumpter horses or mules were chiefly employed to carry baggage, and which are still very common for this use in the Low Countries. The weight of this basket produced a most appalling effect on the bearer's countenance, which seemed straining and bloated almost to bursting; while his person, instead of its usual slight but muscular appearance, showed a corpulent unwieldiness which an ill-fitting doublet, not of his livery suit, made more prominent. Before Theresa could address a sentence of the many which crowded for utterance, he set down his load, with

more tenderness than might have been expected towards what had so much oppressed him; and he then sat down on it, with but little ceremony towards the presence in which he appeared.

As if to distract the marquess's attention, the false commissary approached him, and with a fluency of official jargon, well assumed, he employed him, while Jans, rapidly recovering, endeavoured by sundry signs of manual hieroglyphic to impress on Theresa that he reposed on somewhat of secret importance. She could not comprehend him, having no confidence in nor sympathy with his demonstrations. But she hastily read the billet he handed to her, while Madame Marguerite, in a voice of astonishment, exclaimed in Flemish, no other language being cognoscent to Jans Broeklaer,—

“Why, Jans, man, what has come over you? you are grown so portly and lazy! and your livery? Have you thrown that aside? Why, what is all this metamorphosis?”

“Ah, Madame Marguerite,” replied he, expressively, “the livery of the Van Rozenhoeds is no passport to honour or safety in this place; and if I have grown somewhat fat on a sudden, be assured it is not from want of exertion in saving some matters of consequence to my master and my young mistress here. Ask no questions, but trust to Providence.”

“Ah, Jans, Jans, you were always a cunning, scheming varlet—but I know you to be honest, and I shall not interfere with you or your sly doings,” added Madame Marguerite, glad to be saved the trouble of enquiry.

“My father tells me here, Mr. Commissary,” said Theresa, in a calm and steady tone, but with a look that could not quite conceal her anxious curiosity, “that you will deliver to me the contents of this basket, which you hold under lock and key; and that I shall therein learn every particular of his situation and wishes. Perhaps, marquess, I may trespass on your indulgence while this proceeding takes place?”

“My good young lady,” replied the obsequious old courtier, “this house, and all it contains, are at your command. Would that my duty allowed of its doors being open to your free passage out, as they are to the admission of all you may desire. But you are mistress of every part except my courtyard-gate. I will now wish you good night, and pleasant slumbers to ye both, fair ladies. When this respectable func-

tionary has gone through the details of his mission, he and the worshipful burgomaster's serving-man shall find refreshment and good cheer below. May to-morrow's sun shine on your happiness, young lady! and its beams be reflected in *your* still blooming countenance, my respected friend! If the tooth of Time has poison at its root, it finds an antidote when it would gnaw the beauty of Madame Marguerite de Lovenskerke."

"What a dear and precious man it is!" exclaimed the benevolent dame, as the marquess bowed himself out of the room backwards. "How upright he walks—how fresh he looks! There is the true court-breeding—politeness without flattery—sincerity and civility hand-in-hand! And what sweet language! How figurative! Ah, this reminds me of early days of elegance! Oh, what a difference between the refined airs of a palace, and the roughness of a stadthouse! Dearest Theresa, how lucky we are to have gained the notice of the archduchess, and the protection of this amiable nobleman. And what a bright and blessed prospect is before you, with that fine young Baron Lyderic! The De Roulemondes are a proud stock to be engrafted on, let me tell you. When the holy wars first roused the nations, and Hugo de Roulemonde——"

"For Heaven's sake, persuade her to leave the room. It is a case of life and death," whispered Renault Claassen to Theresa, who immediately interrupted Madame Marguerite, saying,—

"My dear, dear madam, some other time will suit that subject better. Recollect that this gentleman, the court commissary, waits to complete his official duty. Had you not better retire to your sleeping chamber, while myself and Nona receive and count the contents of yonder basket? Indeed, poor Fanchon seems weary, and would gladly, methinks, seek her usual bed on your pillow."

"Dear creature, she does look drowsy; her lively little eyes are winking in their sockets," said Madame Marguerite, touched in this most tender point of her susceptibility—"and it is right to pay due consideration to the agent of the court. Yes, we will both retire, and leave you, Theresa love, to your task. Good night, Mr. Commissary! Jans Broeklaer, man, be not so loosely attired on the morrow, nor put aside your

livery for a slovenly suit that is not suitable. The badge of Van Rozenhoed will not be henceforward a disregarded mark, or much I marvel. I see new honours and distinctions in store for the name. Bless you, dear child—sleep sound, and dream happily of your good fortune, and the sweet Baron Lyderic!”

These last words accompanied the kind nightly embrace she was wont to give our heroine, and she was soon shut safely in her sleeping-room. The instant she had disappeared, and ere Theresa had uttered a word, the three other persons left with her in the chamber sprang, as if by preconcerted arrangement, to their different points of action, to complete the purpose they were prepared to effect.

Claassen threw himself on his knees beside the basket, and precipitately opened the locks and clasps. Nona double bolted the chief door of the chamber as well as that leading to Madame Marguerite's bed-room. And Jans Broeklaer flung off his buckram doublet, and to Theresa's infinite surprise and almost horror uncoiled from round his body a rope of considerable thickness and length; he then, without uttering a word, stepped briskly to the oriel window which stood out from the chamber, as has been already described, and opening back one of the narrow frames, he adroitly twisted the rope round the stanchion that separated the compartments, and tied, with his utmost strength, a many-doubled knot.

Theresa's eyes followed these movements of the confederates, and a sense of undefinable danger rushed through her. But she was transfixed with terror when she saw the basket roll from side to side with violent motion, evidently caused by the struggles of some living thing within it. She almost fainted at the shock. The combination of Broeklaer, Claassen, and De Roulemonde, with treachery and outrage, filled at once her brain and heart. She fled in recovered vigour to the utmost distance of the chamber, while Nona came towards her and exclaimed,—

“My dearest young mistress, have no fears. You cannot doubt *my* fidelity. Look, look! do you not now understand all this?”

Theresa's tongue seemed to cleave to her palate, and her eyes felt glassy and frozen, as she saw, as through a mist, the figure of a man disengage itself from the basket; when Re-

nault Claassen, in his turn, came towards her and said, in a voice almost inarticulate,—

“Oh, fear not, loveliest of your sex; you must be convinced of *my* devotion! See *him* and be confident and courageous. I leave the task of explanation to his tongue.”

With these words he moved towards the door, and Jans Broeklaer, replacing his doublet, which he clapped over and over his body, whispered hurriedly in Theresa's ear,—

“Could the daughter of my master suspect for one moment his old and grateful servant? God bless you, Miss Theresa! Keep a good heart, and trust all to *him*.”

He followed Claassen to the door, pointing as he uttered the last words to the figure, which now came rapidly forward. And as this new object of dread gently uttered the word “Theresa!” the film seemed to fly from her eyes, her heart sprang up anew into the bosom it seemed to have abandoned, and following the instinctive movement that urged her on, she threw herself into the open arms of Lambert Boonen.

Such a movement at such a crisis must be decisive of the heart of any girl in whom susceptibility combines with sentiment; when, chaste and unabashed, she trusts herself to the impulse of nature, without one throb of guilt, or one tremor of alarm.

It is in this first, this *only*, moment that woman is all but divine: ere passion has grown to consciousness, or purity degenerated into art; when she seems to stand on the verge of mortality, yet unappropriated between heaven and earth. And so stood Theresa then, clasped in the arms of him who was to her, at the moment, the whole universe combined.

When an accurate sense of reality dawned once more on her mind, she raised her head from the shoulder on which it reposed, and, in the first feeling of modest sensitiveness, looked around to see if other eyes than his had watched her. They stood alone. Nona had followed the movement of Claassen and Broeklaer, and stepped into Theresa's room, for the double purpose of leaving her mistress and the apprentice undisturbed, and making some rapid preparations for the measure, to forward which she was half ready.

Lambert Boonen, after a few brief moments given to his triumphant consciousness of Theresa's love, broke the luscious silence in which he held her to him, and murmured a sentence

of gratitude and joy. She replied, in words too faint for echo, too fine for other ears than his to whom alone they spoke ; but so true to nature, virtue, and affection, that every mind can imagine them, and most will remember to have heard or spoken such on some one occasion similar to that we now describe.

“ Then you will trust yourself to me without scruple or dread ? You ask no explanation of my conduct — no pledge for my honour — the past and future are alike disregarded — you repose entirely on me ? ”

“ Yes, wholly and for ever ! On whom may I rely but you ? Are you not my only friend in this hour of mystery and danger ? Do not your uncle, my father, my own heart, confirm your title to my utmost confidence ? Deal with me as you like, lead me where you will, my life, my honour are from this hour a portion of your own.”

Such were the first positive phrases uttered on either side after those vague murmurings of the heart alluded to above. These words were spoken in a tone of firm and well assured confidence, worthy the sweet and solemn obligation they implied.

“ Then, so far, love has triumphed ! ” exclaimed the apprentice, as Theresa finished the sentence which sealed his success. “ To this point, wealth, and rank, and ambition, have all sunk before its sway ! But much remains, Theresa, beautiful and blessed creature that thou art, to try the heart that thus devotes itself to mine. I scorn to take it by surprise. I would not, for the immeasurable rapture of its profession, accept it with the angel form it throbs in, without the conviction that reason and reflection ratified the gift. Thou scarcely knowest me yet. ’Tis true, the days that have run past have had the pith of ages in them, but I have yet to prove me worthy of thy love, and many a deed to do ere thou may’st know me to be so. Events come crowding on ; dangers beset us on the entrance to the path that ought to lead to bliss. Temptations assail thee ; and perils environ me. Each and all must be met, and vanquished too, ere I can dare to claim thee as mine, or thou canst confirm the pledge of this unguarded moment. But that pledge — for ’t is of *thyself*, Theresa — is a holy deposit, which I swear to hold sacred ! and more, I vow, in Heaven’s name, to yield it up unsullied — to give thee back

unto thyself, pure as thou art this minute, if when thou knowest my nature and thine own, thy heart retracts the vow thy tongue has uttered."

"Generous and noble — in the heart's heraldry how truly noble! Let me answer thee."

"That I could listen to thee on life's last verge, Heaven witness for me! But now, Theresa, thy safety is at stake — the sand runs quickly in the glass. We have not one moment to lose, if moments such as this be not rather treasures snatched from time, though ruin tread upon his steps. Then list to me. This hour is big with thy fate. This very hour the plan is organised that forces thee to wed De Roulemonde with to-morrow's dawn. The act that confiscates thy father's whole fortune, and then, as a deed of grace, transfers it to the husband of his daughter, is at this hour preparing. And as for me and that true-hearted being, young Claassen, we are marked for ruin, to remove the very shade of rivalry from the road of that base baron to whom they dare to doom thee. Thy father knows all. Broeklaer has been the means of acting between him and Claassen, who, in the guise of an abettor to his father's treachery, has come with Lyderic to watch over the object of his perfidious designs. To me he has been already a saviour. He has confided all to me, and joined, as thou hast seen, to save thee from this fate. Spurning all jealousies, yielding up all rivalry, he last night made himself known to me, and saved me by timely warning, as he had attempted to do thy father, for it was his hand that placed the written caution in thine. In short, thou now knowest all that may be told. Flight is the only chance of safety. The means are at hand. Thine eyes have marked the measures we have taken. Canst thou, wilt thou venture? Sanctioned by thy father's commands, sure of his safety, for without a line of proof against him, and with a thousand motives for forbearance on the part of the archdukes, not a hair of his head is perilled, thou hast every warrant to justify this decisive step. The abbess of Saint Wyvin, two leagues hence, is prepared to expect thee in the sanctuary of her convent; and that all due decorum may be observed, thy worthy chaperone Madame Marguerite shall accompany us."

"Oh, much I fear she will not consent to leave the protection of this house, or sanction my flight!" said Theresa.

"Tut, tut—she *shall!*" answered the apprentice, with a tone of positive dictation, that sounded harsh in such rapid contrast with his previous seductive words.

"Thy quick eye, beloved one," added he, in rapid return to what Theresa thought his natural accent, "must have caught the meaning of Jans Broeklaer's preparations. That window, Theresa, that rope, yonder basket—such are our means of safety. The strength of thy mind will answer yes, even while its innocence may shrink from a complicity with such a mode of flight."

A keen feeling of reproach shot through Theresa at these words, as the memory of her involuntary share in Beatrice's evasion flashed upon her; and a deeper sense of degradation arose, with the recollection of the outrage that had that night defiled (as her delicacy considered it) the sacred purity of her fair form. Forgetting, for the instant, all other thoughts, she writhed under the upbraiding pang that seemed to tell her she was unworthy of the chaste enthusiasm of Lambert Boonen's late embrace, and her only feeling was the imperative desire to avow to him what she felt.

But before she could frame an utterable phrase, he once more folded his arm round her waist, and gently urged her towards the room where Nona made her preparations. A few persuasive words accompanied the movement; and then, as a low whistle sounded far down in the vague space beneath the window, he loudly whispered,—

"There is the signal, by Heavens! Claassen and Broeklaer are at their posts. There is no time for choice—thou must not speak, Theresa, I will not have thy consent—the whole responsibility of this step be on my head! I force thee to thy safety, in the sacred guardianship of thy parent's wishes and thy lover's will."

These were the last words spoken. For when Theresa opened her lips in recovered energy, to pronounce her full assent, the apprentice, with impassioned audacity, pressed his own against them, and with one more long, deep kiss, set the seal of office on Love's fiat.

In a few minutes more Theresa was equipped for flight, in a dress of plain materials, hastily procured by Renault Claassen, and carried in the basket, with another destined for Madame Marguerite.

Theresa gave no thought to the fashion or fitness of her loose robe of brown camlet, which a plain belt and buckle fastened round, and drew into plaits across the waist and bosom that would have given grace to the coarsest stuff or clumsiest workmanship. A close coif contained her flowing ringlets, and over it was loosely thrown one of those black silk scarfs called *faiilles*, peculiar to the females of Brussels, then as now, and well adapted to the purpose of unostentatious concealment. A travelling cloak covered all; and when with animated and tender looks she came out thus habited for her perilous enterprise, the apprentice could not resist squandering another precious minute in rapturously gazing on her. He had not been unemployed while Theresa made her hasty toilette; but had firmly fastened the extreme end of Jans Broeklaer's rope within the handles of the basket; and he now, in few words, assured Theresa and Nona of its perfect security for the purpose of their descent into the street.

With cautious delicacy towards Theresa, even in this moment of anxiety for her escape, when a lapse of punctilio might have been pardoned, the apprentice made Nona first enter the basket, that her mistress might be received in her faithful arms when she reached the earth. Nona fearlessly trusted herself to the guidance of him for whom she had been the sure and steady friend during his short but important course of courtship. In a few seconds she was safe below; and the basket was quickly drawn up again to receive the most precious freight that could be embarked by a lover's hands to the chances of earth, sea, or air. Theresa took her place, with high-wrought confidence, gave one glance that spoke her whole mind to her lover; and the rope which she held steadily above her head soon glided again in sinuous folds round the smooth stanchion that served to check its too rapid course, while the apprentice, with one foot firmly placed against the wall, gradually let it slip; and as it vibrated between his hands and Theresa's, it formed a conductor for every pulse between heart and heart.

Our heroine safely reached the ground, where she was received by the respectful services of Nona, Jans Broeklaer, and Renault Claassen. By these she was released from her seat, and while she spoke a few words of cordial import to the latter, which thrilled his breast with painful ecstasy, the basket

was quickly pulled up again, to be reloaded with a weight that might well have strained its wicker thews and sinews.

As soon as the apprentice had the basket safely again in his possession, he approached the door of Madame Marguerite's room, and listening for a moment, he was satisfied that the unsuspecting dame was employed in her wonted task of nightly devotion. If he felt any qualms at disturbing her piety, they were stifled by the urging voice of necessity. He knew it would be vain to attempt reasoning her into the step he had decided on her taking. So trusting to his own agility and strength, he took up the capacious travelling dress, arranged by guess-work to her measure, softly drew back the bolt, and opened the bed-room door. He saw the good woman on her knees by her bed-side, and stealing, unheard and unperceived, even by Fanchon, who slept profoundly on the pillow, he reached Madame Marguerite, threw the dress completely over her head, tied it round her face and neck as closely as possible on the safe side of suffocation, and seized her in his arms, before she had time to be frightened, or power to express her astonishment. The inert and passive mass of flesh which the apprentice carried in his arms, and placed in the basket, might well have terrified a nervous man into a dread of death having wholly paralysed it. But he judged that it was fear that had, after the first shock, seized on her; and he tied her into the contracted vehicle, placed the snarling and snapping Fanchon in her lap; then launched her on her aerial descent, and by powerful exertion held steady against the weighty drag, until he felt it arrested by the arms of the receivers below. Then catching the rope with hands, knees, and feet, he swung off from the window-frame, slipped actively down, and was soon safely on *terra firma* again.

The whole arrangement had been made with admirable method. Madame Marguerite, apparently either dead or dumb, was already placed on a hand-litter, procured for the occasion, which Renault Claassen and Jans Broeklaer carried between them. And the apprentice drawing one of Theresa's arms under one of his, and Nona's under the other, the whole party immediately moved forward, up the hilly way leading to the park. They soon completed the ascent, through the waste grounds, and up the hill side, which the park trees at that time quite covered. They passed over one of the many

breaches in the crumbling wall which surrounded it, and traversed its untrimmed alleys and bosquets, startling at times the deer with which it was stocked; while the nightingales, with whom its tall planes and elms have ever been a favourite resort, poured forth their songs to the many listening lovers beneath.

The party went on silently, and with little interruption but occasional halts for breath-taking by the litter-bearers, across the park in a sloping direction, towards the gate which then stood about the spot now occupied by that on the new Boulevards, leading to Louvaine, the only other entrance being beyond where the king's palace and gardens stand at present. Another breach in the wall, on the opposite side to that which the party had crossed, allowed them to pass out from the park, and close to the foot of the ramparts. They there stopped at a stone stairway leading up directly to one of the several brick-built octagonal towers that garnished the city walls. This one, which was called, from legendary recollection, "The Weaver's Tower," may be still seen standing on its lonely mound, the last cracked and crumbling monument of those ancient defences of Brussels. The sergeant of the guard on duty there received the whole party as expected guests; led them silently through the low door and narrow passage of the tower, and down a flight of steps into the fossé of the ramparts, and by a like means up the opposite mound, and out upon the open country overhanging the valley and ponds of Etterbeeke.

There the sergeant left them, and returned; the consideration for his services having been duly settled beforehand, by the provident liberality of Theresa's confederate protectors. The least favoured, but the most disinterested, of these, here also took his leave of her, accompanied by Broeklaer, and faithfully promising to make known her escape to her father by daybreak. She spoke a few grateful sentences, which Renault Claassen received in silent homage. A horse-litter, with a single attendant, waited on the spot, with a led horse, which the apprentice mounted, having first placed the two ladies, with their tire-woman, in the vehicle.

Madame Marguerite was unbound; and her joy was unbounded, at finding herself safe with Theresa and Fanchon. She had no time allowed for enquiries, complaints, or con-

gratulations, before the litter started off at a brisk pace, the leather curtains being drawn close round by the careful apprentice, who rode at the side occupied by Theresa.

CHAPTER XIII.

As soon as Madame Marguerite recovered the power of utterance, she commenced a fluent volley of reproaches and threats against the unknown perpetrators of the outrage, which she supposed to have been shared by Theresa as well as herself. The latter did not undeceive her on that point, but endeavoured to tranquillise her by assurances that all was done with Van Rozenhoed's approval, and by expressions of her reliance on the integrity and courage of their deliverer, Master Lambert Boonen. Madame Marguerite was ill satisfied with this information. She had hoped that this abduction had been a gallant extravagance on the part of Lyderic, as was common in those days of masquerade and mystery, when it was considered quite plebeian to attain the happiest results by the plainest means ; a system which the cold-hearted precision of modern taste has utterly reversed. A faint notion had even flashed before her mind that the gallant Marquess of Assembourg, warmed by the remembrance of her former charms, had raised the spirit of chivalry, for the substance of which he had been noted about the middle part of the century, just then at its close, and had followed up his figurative compliments by carrying her off in a sack, instead of quietly proposing for her hand and leading her to the altar in a wedding suit. Such were the extravagant imaginings that acted so composingly on the widow, when she found herself so suddenly seized in her bedchamber, and which prevented her from making the least struggle or attempt at remonstrance during the whole course of the adventure. That this should, after all, turn out to be a mere prudential measure to save Theresa from the brilliant misery prepared for her, and possibly marring those fair fancies which sprung from the marquess's tropes, was deeply mortifying, and more especially as it was effected through the agency of "a Boonen."

As the horses walked quietly up a rising ground, she exclaimed, "A Boonen carry off a De Lovenskerke, indeed! A-lack a-day, but it is come to a pretty pass with high blood! Better, ay, far better, to have been seized on by a Bassenvelt, even by the bold and bad Count Gabriel, or his old ancestor, Gerard the Saracen, were that possible. Let what might happen, there is less dishonour in the violence of nobility than in the protection of low birth."

"For Heaven's sake, madam, speak not so, or at least not so loud, our benefactor and safeguard, Master Boonen, may be within hearing," whispered Theresa; and as she spoke, she felt an ungloved hand steal softly under the leathern curtain of the litter, and by that instinct, which, somehow or other, never fails on such occasions, it was very soon cordially clasped in one of hers, and both responded in a silent movement of soft pressure, for which love beat double time in two bosoms.

"It is, however, some consolation that we are destined for the sanctuary of Grand Bygard," resumed Madame Marguerite, after some pettish expressions of her indifference as to Master Boonen's ears being long or short, near or distant. "There we shall be in the safe keeping of the blessed relics of its foundress, the holy Saint Wyvin, celebrated for the cure of sore throat, plague, pleurisy, and fever, both in man and beast—and we shall be in reach of rescue, by the valiant arms of the brave baron and the elegant marquess. Yes, yes, Saint Wyvin will take care of us; and what miracle may she not perform! How many are the cancers and quinsies cured by touching her tomb? Did she not drive the devil out of her lover Richward during her life? and did not the taper of Father Ingelbert light up of itself as he passed by her corpse? Did not Festrode, the crooked tailor of Braine le Duc, grow straight when he crawled to her shrine? Did not sister Marie Elizabeth Jezabel see her carried up to heaven by the angels, on a couch of gold and precious stones? and didn't she cure the eleven cows of Geoffry Coster, the heretic, of Opwycken? * Yes, there at least we shall be safe—and the marquess will soon come, I'll warrant me, to follow up the miracles of the saint."

* For the particulars of these wonders, and many others quite as true, we refer the curious to "The Life and Miracles of St. Wivine," which may be found in some ancient collections in various towns of the Netherlands.

Madame Marguerite might have run through the whole calendar uninterrupted, while Theresa was occupied as before hinted at ; and she did give ample scope to her garrulity, until a propensity of an opposite nature claimed indulgence too, and she fell fast asleep, holding Fanchon securely on her lap. What stoppings or changings, or if any, took place during the remainder of the night, were without the cognisance of the worthy widow, whose example was laudably followed, or imitated, by Nona on the opposite seat : while Theresa, more conscious, but quite as unobserving of all travelling vicissitudes, passed a night of whispering monotony that she then thought the most delicious that even imagination could create. It seemed but almost begun ; the horses' feet appeared to have moved in one unchanging track ; all was as though Time had stood still ; when, little by little, the unseen hand that she yet retained in hers assumed an evident shape—the arm grew, as it were, towards the body that gradually became distinct—the beams of two soul-speaking eyes pierced the dusky space beyond the carriage—and the whole animated face and form of her lover was visible, as the infant dawn rose from its cradle of light, and spread its smiles on the awakening earth.

The breath of morning came freshly on Theresa's cheek, and she felt more revived than if she had slept away the night. She looked out on the young day, and listened to the songs of the birds. She caught the fragrance of the wild flowers as they opened to the breeze. The music, the perfume, the very breath of heaven itself, seemed to enter her heart, and make it instinct with all that is most pure and sweet in Nature.

The little cortège had travelled cautiously by a circuitous route to baffle any attempt at pursuit, and avoid interruption from the patrols of the garrison of Brussels, which were on the alert in certain points of the neighbourhood, and of whose particular positions the apprentice seemed well informed. When daybreak surprised the lovers, as we have already related, the litter was ascending the narrow by-road that winds through the wood of Cambre, and over the gentle varieties of hill and valley close to the ancient village of Boetsford. Theresa's eyes rested with a hitherto unknown delight on the beautiful panorama that grew into life under the creative beams of the morn. The horses trod lightly in a path that wound through fields of unenclosed culture. A rich pastoral land-

scape was all around. The extensive *Sonien Bosch* bounded the view, as far as the eye could reach, in a magnificent sweep of verdure, in which the perennial shades of the pine trees were relieved by the new-born tints of spring. In the heart of this scene stood Boetsford, with its old grey church, its castle, its farm-houses and cottages of red or white, and its succession of clear lakes, forming so many liquid mirrors, in which the forest branches were reflected, stretching far down into the mimic sky.

Such a view as this was totally new to our heroine, who had been hitherto accustomed to the cheerless and changeless scenery of Flanders. Her mind was in a fitting state to receive the impressions of external nature: at every forward step in these new regions a fresh spring of delight seemed to gush beneath her feet. The wary apprentice took a road that led round the village; and ere the curiosity of its inhabitants had warning that strangers were passing by, the litter and its escort were out of the reach of enquiry or observation, and pursuing their route through the forest, towards the hamlet and adjacent priory of Groenendael.* Just at this period, while Theresa was softly murmuring her admiration of the ever-shifting beauty of this romantic track, and her companion, still close to her side, leant a keen attention to her vivid expressions of pleasure, Madame Marguerite, Nona, and Fanchon simultaneously awoke, in consequence of a violent jolt given to the litter by its contact with a stump of elm, that projected in the careless grace of nature's mathematics beyond the strict line of road-making precision. The various occupants of the vehicle were flung at random from their places; and as if chance itself had harmonised with love, Theresa was jerked almost over the side, and into the ready arms of the apprentice, who had for some hours walked beside the litter, resigning his horse to the guidance of the man who rode the leading mule.

The exclamations usual on such occasions being over, order was soon restored, and the postilion descended to assist the apprentice in arranging a part of the clumsy cross-bar that had been displaced by the shock. No sooner did Theresa's eyes rest on this man's face, than she started, and a curdling shudder crept through her frame. Why, she could not tell. That she had seen the face before, she was certain. Where,

* The Green Valley.

she had not the remotest recollection. The countenance was a foreign one, and evidently disguised; but there was nothing actually bad in its expression. The cause of Theresa's emotion was probably the sensitiveness unusually excited by the late agitating events. Might superstition be taken into account, another solution could be given, and this indefinable dread be attributed to those forebodings of ill, which moral anatomy may dissect, but cannot account for. When the postilion vaulted into his saddle, Theresa gently whispered to the apprentice, who had resumed *his* place, —

“Do you know that man?”

“Why? do *you*?” exclaimed the apprentice quickly, and looking fixedly on Theresa.

“Not exactly,” replied she, somewhat confused at his manner; — “but a vague recollection tells me that I have seen his face before, and a still more vague apprehension makes me fear him now.”

“Shake off the prejudice, sweet Theresa, nor cherish groundless fears. The man is honest; I have tried him, and I hold him to me by the strongest tie that can bind man to man — gratitude, my best love.”

This was uttered with that tone of frank conviction that gives to a listener a delightful notion that such a speaker has a generous confidence in his kind which even the winter-blast of experience could not shake. Theresa received this new proof of her lover's good feeling with a sweet satisfaction, and she felt as if she had been unworthy of such a man's regard to remain a moment unconvinced by his example. She conveyed the sentiment to him by an eloquent look, and then turned to meet the observations which Madame Marguerite began to indulge in.

“Why — what — how is this — where are we now?” said the good dame, as she rapidly flounced from side to side in the litter, pushed away the curtains, and popped her head out to the right and left. “Why, Master Boonen, since you are our guide in this strange and most indecently-executed and uncalled-for removal, is this the road you have taken to Grand Bygard? Why, by my halidame! — and a solemn oath that is this fine spring morning — if we are not in the heart of the *Sonien Bosch*! Deny it not, Master Boonen. Though more than twenty years have passed since I traversed this forest, I

know it well ; ay, I could almost recognise each individual tree. How is this, Master Boonen ? ”

The apprentice briefly explained the motives of his having made so considerable a circuit, and his going now directly south, towards a destination that lay due west ; and he added, that it was his purpose, with the ladies’ approbation, to proceed forthwith to the priory of Groenendael hard by, and demand from the courtesy of the superior a morning’s meal for the whole party.

“ And that we may surely command, Master Boonen, when it is a De Lovenskerke that sounds the porter’s horn ! You know not, perhaps, that it was my noble ancestress Duchesse Jeanne of Brabant, who gave, from her sovereign right in this forest, the lands that appertain to this priory of Groenendael, as well as of the monasteries of Boetendael, Levenborn, and Roo-clooster, near three centuries ago ? and here it was that the pious and reverend abbot, John Curegimus, ‘ the good cook of Affligem,’ when he gave up the kitchen and betook himself to the cloister, made a dying bequest of two hundred Brabant crowns a year for ever, to secure daily a matin meal to the earliest travellers that might ask it. So even if our purses were empty, Master Boonen, we have two good claims on the abbey larder.”

The natural good temper of Madame Marguerite, strengthened by the sleep she had, with slight interruptions, indulged in all night, was evidently reconciling her to her situation ; and the apprentice, by an apparent keenness in relishing her jokes, completely confirmed her return to her natural frame of mind. Just then, a sudden opening in the narrow road, which leads from the skirts of the forest into a space that unites much that is exquisite in scenery, showed such a burst of natural beauty, that Madame Marguerite loudly exclaimed, while Theresa silently gazed on the scene, —

“ Oh, but this glads my heart again ! The young, bright days of youth come back on me once more. The dear friends of early scenes are all before me. The blithesome hours we have spent in this very valley ! the gambols we have indulged in in these beautiful woods ! See there, the long pure lakes that smile so placidly on either side of the road ! Indeed, indeed, it all looks the same as when I passed here my first week of wedded happiness. The very swans that float there seem un

changed, the old grey abbey mouldering yonder—the royal tree in front, under whose branches Charles the Fifth, the grandfather of our present archduchess, so proudly entertained at dinner six crowned heads ! But, oh ! how much less happy were the hearts that sighed under the weight of those diadems, than were mine and my poor dear Ralph's and the glad party that shared our joyous mood ! Alas, for the by-gone days of youth and pleasure ! How fleeting in themselves, yet how indelible in memory !”

This effusion of genuine sensibility was followed by a flood of tears, and the unstudied moral so carelessly thrown out by the speaker was not lost on the minds of two of the listeners at least.

Just at this point of view, which those who have seen are not likely to forget, and close to an ancient fountain, on the spot where the solitary yet cheerful little inn and toll-house of Groenendael now stands, the driver of the litter stopped suddenly, sprang off his mule, and rapidly ascended the heath-covered mound on the left hand side of the road, which commands so beautiful a view into the recesses of the forest that covers with peculiar grace the hills and dales around. No sooner was he on the summit than Theresa heard him utter a wild and plaintive cry, which she immediately recognised as a fragment of a Moorish ditty chanted at times by Beatrice, in suppressed tones, as they wandered in the convent garden at Bruges ; and which she had explained to be one of the signal cries of the revolted Moriscoes among the recesses of the Alpuxara hills. This sound, even from Beatrice's voice, had ever produced a painful effect on Theresa, by its sad, yet wild expression. Now it seemed to pierce her like some sharp weapon ; she grasped the apprentice's arm, while he answered her look of terror by one of soft enquiry.

“ Oh, Master Boonen,” said she, “ what is the meaning of that sound ? It fills me with dread ! and this lonely spot—why do we halt here ? Prithee let us on to the priory—why does the driver quit his mule, and leave us standing here ?—my heart misgives me—let us on, let us on !”

“ Dearest Theresa, still those causeless fears. Are you not safe with *me* ? Have no doubts of our attendant—I know him to be faithful to the core. He comes from a distant country—may not this strain be some religious chant sent

to the memory of his native land? Cheer up, cheer up, repose with safety on my protection — we shall soon proceed to a place of surety to us all.”

These soothing words were interrupted by a shriek from Madame Marguerite, who, while the others spoke, had been gazing through her tears on the woods beyond, and peopling them with groups of former days.

“Jesu Maria!” exclaimed she, “we are lost! see where they come!” and as she spoke, she burst open the door of the litter, seized Fanchon in her arms, flung herself out, and would have fallen to the ground, had not the apprentice caught her and held her up.

“Oh, let me fly!” cried she, “would you barbarously deliver me up to them? Come, Theresa, child, come — let us escape into the forest — do not hold me, Master Boonen, but fly with us if you would yourself be saved!”

Theresa and her lover looked forward on hearing these incoherent words, and saw, indeed, that Madame Marguerite spoke not without cause; the whole side of the hanging wood beyond the causeway and narrow bridge that connected the lakes seemed alive with men and horses. Armour and lances gleamed in the rays that now darted from the risen sun into the very heart of the forest. The branches shook off the glittering dew showers, as the horsemen dashed through the intricate paths, and came down the hill with fearless rapidity, driving out upon the earth and air several wild boars, foxes, and hares, with flocks of singing birds, and their fierce enemies of beak and talons, all of which abounded in those days, though now rarely met with in the *Sonien Bosch*. The squadron of cavaliers thus scattered through the copse soon gained the road, and were forming into regular line, in obedience to the orders of one whose actions indicated command. Theresa’s eyes, though they took in every detail of the scene, were more particularly fixed on the figure of this person. The white plume, the blue scarf, the black armour, half hidden by a short cloak of dark purple, and finally the beautiful Arabian steed, which pranced and bounded under the rider’s graceful guidance, convinced her that she gazed on the original of the Marquess of Assembourg’s description. A whirlwind of feeling passed through her mind — her head swam round — her heart felt chill, and faintly exclaiming, “It is De Bassen-

velt!" she sunk in a paroxysm of emotion on the outstretched arm that was ready to receive her. The apprentice firmly held up her drooping head, and with his disengaged arm he closely grasped Madame Marguerite's substantial bulk, preventing an attempt at flight, which he saw to be useless; for in the few moments thus occupied, three or four cavaliers galloped rapidly up to the litter, the main body remaining on the causeway as they quickly formed into line. At the close by sounds of the horses' hoofs, Theresa revived, and with affrighted stare, she looked on the approaching objects of terror, not, however, without a feeling of intense and painful curiosity. To see the person of De Bassenvelt revealed to her — him, whose indelicate boldness had once before, in darkness and mystery, shocked her modesty, and mortified her pride — whose name had since aroused such various emotions — to see him now, in the suddenness of his fierce energy and power, at once excited and appalled her, as one whose eyes are rivetted with fearful interest on the fancied apparition of the dead.

She looked upon the foremost of those who galloped up, but immediately observed that neither the man nor his steed was that which she had fixed on before. But had any doubt existed, it would have been removed by his first words.

"Ladies," exclaimed he, in imperfect French, reining up his horse, taking off his helmet, and bowing down to the pommel of his saddle,—"ladies, fear nothing at all, for ye are safe, and free from all harm. I am Thaddeus Gallagher, lieutenant in De Bassenvelt's Black Walloons, and am ordered by Count Ivon himself, our noble colonel, who will be a general ere long, to tell you that he has you under his protection, and is bail for your freedom from harm or hinderance, except that you are prisoners, and must come straight to his castle of Welbasch, by a little round, to save time and avoid accidents."

"Oh, the wretch, the wretch! By what pretext does he dare to interrupt two noble ladies of the oldest houses in Flanders?" exclaimed Madame Marguerite. The officer, without paying any attention to the apostrophe, replied,—

"The count is well informed of those whom he has the honour, in all humility, to capture as his lawful prizes, by the rules of the highways and of civil war, and he lays himself at the feet of the beautiful Heiress of Bruges, in the profoundest

admiration — and well he may call her beautiful, or my name is not Gallagher — and he means, as you may perceive, ladies, not to approach her in his own proper person, not to speak one single word to her out of his own mouth, as one might say, until she is safely lodged in his castle; nor even then without her leave, till she pays her own ransom, by throwing herself into his open arms; and it is not the first time — no offence, mademoiselle — that those arms of his were the refuge of beauty and virtue."

The blush of self-reproach which rose to Theresa's cheeks was chased away by a smile, equally involuntary, at the gallant turn which the Irishman, either by design or accident, gave to the questionable remark.

"And the count commands me also to say," continued he, "that out of respect to the lovely Mademoiselle Van Rozenhoed, her escort here, this quiet and peaceable-looking young gentleman, may go about his business wherever he likes; while, as for this old lady, whose name has slipped my memory ——"

"Oh, Master Boonen, can you bear this?" interrupted Madame Marguerite; "have you no blood to boil up at these indignities and to be shed in our defence? Is this the way you do your duty, and protect us? Is a De Lovenskerke to meet with slight and contumely on the very grounds of her ancestors, and no sword be drawn to avenge her? Why, Master Boonen, do you not pull your blade from its scabbard, and die fighting for me and my hapless young kinswoman?"

"In sooth, madam," said the apprentice, "I would cheerfully lay down my worthless life to do her service; but methinks that may be better now effected by a living friend than a dead man: I therefore let my sword lie still; and implore ye both, sweet ladies, to consider that the unpractised arm of one civilian could but little avail in a conflict with numerous trained soldiers such as these. Submission is a duty where resistance is hopeless; and in urging ye to meet this calamity with patient courage, I humbly devote myself to your bidding, be that what it may."

"Devote yourself, indeed!" bitterly cried Madame Marguerite,—"and is this what you call devotion? Ay, so it may be in the notions of a Boonen! But, alas! how different are those of high birth and chivalry! How would one of noble

blood have thrown his body as a rampart before us, to be hacked and trampled on by swords and hoofs ! oh, were but the gallant Baron de Roulemonde here, or the marquess ! alas, alas ! not one to break a lance for two ladies of birth and quality ! ”

These lamentations would have amused Theresa, had not a rapid mixture of more serious thoughts assailed her. Shocked as she was at the picture of self-destruction sketched by Madame Marguerite, she could not resist a feeling of shame and mortification at beholding the calm and somewhat craven deportment of the apprentice, under circumstances that would, she thought, have aroused every spirited and generous feeling, and made him even rush on desperation. At the same moment an involuntary impulse turned her looks again towards the distant group of cavaliers ; and as the figure of their leader was evident in the light and graceful movements of horsemanship, an irresistible and painful comparison forced itself on her mind ; and her heart sunk at the conviction, that Lambert Boonen seemed an extinguished light in the very gleam of contact with Ivon de Bassenvelt.

The apprentice, as if reading her inmost thoughts, fixed his eyes piercingly on her ; and then, in that peculiar tone which never failed to soften Theresa’s most stubborn thoughts, he said, —

“ Is it then your pleasure that I lay down my life now, or that I reserve the sacrifice until it may be wisdom and not wantonness ? ”

“ Oh, Master Boonen, talk not so ; you make my blood curdle. Your life is *my* life. I throw myself wholly upon you. Do not abandon me ! ”

“ You have but to speak the word. I am free, this officer says ; but only free to be your slave. Whither shall I go, Theresa ? ”

“ Will you not go where I must go ? Could you wilfully trust me in the keeping of him I dread the most on earth ? ”

“ Theresa, hearken to me ! Fate itself seems to mark thee for De Bassenvelt. Thou lovest me, I believe — but tell me truly, dost thou not, even now, feel a secret throb that beats in unison with Count Ivon’s hopes ? Do not the prince’s overtures, thy father’s wishes, thine own occult desires, all join together — and may the poor claims of such a one as I contest

the palm with *him*? Can love withstand opposing influences like these?"

"Probe not my heart by such questioning—I cannot answer thee. In the tempest of my feelings for days past, I am tost upon an ocean of doubt and temptation. I know not my own mind—but my heart has never swerved from its course. I can say no more. Be generous, and ask no further avowal of weakness from me. If there be danger to my faith, oh, stay by me in the hour of trial; the dread of losing thy support half kills me. Oh, in pity, do not leave me to this lawless libertine! Come with me to his haunt. He seems to mean us fair; and I trust that this hapless connection with my poor father may at least procure safety for all attached to him."

"Thy will, Theresa, is my law. I will not quit thee. And, trust me, thy solicitude to soothe me into courage is not lost on me. Yet know me better. I do not fear De Bassenvelt. If common belief speak truth, he is not ungenerous at least; and the prince's friendship for thy father will ensure our honourable treatment. Now, sir lieutenant, we are ready to proceed. I bear these ladies escort to their destination, claiming meet treatment for their sex and quality to the issue of this misadventure."

Lieutenant Gallagher, who had during the preceding colloquy offered no interruption, but rather courteously appeared to remove any, by holding Madame Marguerite in discourse, now spoke again,—

"Young gentleman, make yourself easy on that head. The honour of De Bassenvelt might have answered your demand without giving you the trouble of asking it. I hope, ladies, you fear nothing further?"

"Indeed, Theresa dear," said Madame Marguerite, considerably mollified by some honied speeches made by Lieutenant Gallagher while the apprentice and our heroine had conversed together,—“indeed it may be well that we have fallen into such hands as we have done. This gallant gentleman promises all honour on the part of Count Ivon; and he tells me the whole country is alive with revolt; that the peasantry are up, the image breakers again abroad, and the horrid Martin Schenck ravaging in all directions, from Bommel to Brussels. We may thank the saints to have 'scaped worse hap, and

chanced on chivalrous captors. A Bassenvelt will not belie his blood, I'll warrant him; and though I know nothing positively of the Gallaghers, this officer seems of no ignoble race. Cheer up, then, child, and wait patiently for the succour which is sure to be brought to us by the baron and the marquess. This adventure will end well, after all, or I am much mistaken."

During this speech, Madame Marguerite, assisted by the apprentice, reseated herself in the litter, and seemed in a moment as unruffled as if nothing had disturbed the course of her good humour. Gallagher had galloped off towards the group of horsemen; and Theresa's eyes followed him, as he saluted and conversed a moment or two with the chief, and then returned at full speed; the driver of the litter having meanwhile put fresh mules into its shafts, and taken his place again. Theresa shuddered anew as she remarked him; and she softly said to the apprentice, who still stood by her side,—

"Were, then, my misgivings groundless? Have we not been betrayed?"

"That is a harsh word, Theresa; we must not say *betrayed* till better proof is given us."

"Has that man a sister?"

"He has told me as much."

"I know him, then, indeed! And my heart sinks with a fresh cause of dread. Oh, much I fear a deep snare has been laid for us. A sudden light seems to break on me. A darker passion still than man's desire works me this peril. Woman's jealousy has plotted to entrap me within the reach of vengeance. Yet Heaven knows I seek no rivalry with her! Tell me, Master Boonen, where, when, and how long have you known that dangerous Moor, for such I now recognise him to be?"

"Nay, dearest, that would now be a long tale. Some other time thou shalt know how I met him, and the ties that bind him to me. But now I cannot even ask thee to explain those vague hints of mysteries I may not divine. Here comes this lieutenant back. We must now bear up for the scenes that lie reserved to try our fortitude—and our *faith*, Theresa. Whatever trials await to put us to the test, on one point rest secure;—as long as life beats in my bosom I am thine. No peril shall reach thee that does not first pass over me. Thy weal is my

first object. To watch by thee, until Heaven, thine own choice, and thy father's consent unite to make thee mine for ever, or till thine own lips reject me for another ——”

“ Oh, Master Boonen, say not that cruel and dishonouring word ! I swear ——”

“ Thou shalt *not*, dearest — I will not bind thee by a pledge. I and my destiny are yet a mystery to thee — and never will I join thee in bonds of darkness. The cup of fate is fast filling for me. Though ruin be within it I will drain it to the dregs, so thou sharest it not. And were it brimmed with glory, I would dash it from my lips if thou mayst not partake it ! — Well, lieutenant, let's on ! These ladies are now quite ready, and I, their poor servitor. To horse, and away.”

While Theresa listened with surprised delight to these spirited words, Lieutenant Gallagher looked on the apprentice with a smile, and replied, —

“ Upon the honour of the Gallaghers, young gentleman, it's a pity you were not our commander instead of our captive. But you must let me put you in the right road. Just mount your horse — it is Count Ivon de Bassenvelt's pleasure that you accompany these ladies, as he finds it is theirs.”

“ Really, for my part,” exclaimed Madame Marguerite, “ I see no use in Master Boonen's services, since we are under the protection of the noble Count Ivon ——”

“ Madame Marguerite,” said Theresa, with the calm and resolute air in which she always received the good lady's suggestions, “ it appears to me needful for our honour's sake that my father's friend and representative, Master Boonen, quit us not. May we now proceed, sir, on this forced journey ? We are ready, all.”

“ Assuredly, mademoiselle ; and you may take my word that Count Ivon will not separate you from Master Boonen. He has too much ——”

“ Allow me to say, sir,” interrupted the apprentice somewhat sternly, “ that this lady requires no expounding of motives. Let us proceed. Observe you that your troop and its commander are moving on ?”

“ Upon my word, sir, for a goldbeater's boy, you have a very pretty notion of commanding an old soldier,” said Gallagher, with another smile, that appeared to our sensitive heroine most impertinently contemptuous ; and she listened in

no very gracious mood to the Irishman as he addressed her and pointed towards the distant troop, which filed away into the forest road.

"You see, mademoiselle, our noble colonel takes care to keep himself in the place he thinks you like him to hold. He orders me to tell you that on your arrival at Welbasch — which may it please the blessed St. Patrick you will one day be mistress of! — you will meet with a hearty welcome, in all delicacy and honour, from an old and sure friend."

"Delicacy and honour!" murmured Theresa, blushing deep with resentment at this allusion to Beatrice; but Gallagher took no heed, and continued, —

"And now, ladies, I must most dutifully bid ye farewell, wishing ye a safe journey and the best of good luck. I am now going to gallop with these two fine dragoons up to the very gates of Brussels, that is to say, within a bow's shot of the walls, which will be a good long distance too, for Joos Teckman here will, for a wager, send an arrow from his arbalet as far as the famous flight of Peter d'Assche's, from the ramparts to Scheut-Veld Chapel.* And on the shaft of that very arrow there, mademoiselle, which this same Joos Teckman holds in his hand, you may see fastened the letter that we go to shoot into the heart of the city, announcing that you are safe, and warning the archduke, that if one hair is turned crooked on your worshipful father's head, the head of the provost of Flanders, now a hostage at Welbasch Castle, shall be twisted straight on his shoulders for the same. So have no fear of danger to your parent, for Count Ivon's name is signed to the notice, and he is a man not to be trifled with; for which reason, seeing that he is in a hurry, no more at present from your humble servant, ladies, but a hearty welcome at Welbasch, and good husbands, and soon, and plenty of them! — Whoop! — Bassenvelt — a-boo! — Forward, my boys, and heigh for Brussels!"

With one of those wild yells, and an incomprehensible war-cry in his native language, which distinguished the Irish auxiliaries found serving in those days in all the armies of Europe, Gallagher dashed away, followed close by his two stalwart dra-

* This spot, called still "the Scheut," is at such a distance from the ramparts of Brussels as tempts one to suspect that the chroniclers who record the feat, are themselves no mean performers on the weapon they celebrate.

goons, and they were in a minute out of sight in the forest. Theresa could not help gazing after them with a mixture of admiration and pity, as she considered the perilous errand they were about to undertake; and she listened to the sounds of their horses' feet on the causeway, and shuddered to think that it was on her account those brave men were galloping to probable destruction. A quick association of thought presented De Bassenvelt to her mind, in the triple light of ardour, delicacy, and generosity, all exemplified, as she felt, in his way of conducting his present enterprise.

No sooner had she conceived this thought than she strove to force it from her mind, her jealousy being again aroused by this involuntary bias towards the apprentice's formidable rival; and her heart sank as she hurriedly pictured her present situation, and the imminent danger into which she had drawn her lover. The entreaty that he would fly, and abandon her to her fate, seemed quivering for utterance on her lips; but the dread that he would attribute it to some hidden influence connected with his late questions relative to De Bassenvelt, seemed to strike her dumb.

The few minutes that elapsed while the litter moved slowly on across the bridge, and up the open road that led into the forest, were minutes of agitation almost unequalled in all the varied anxieties which had yet assailed Theresa. But they soon subsided into a state of solemn happiness. She could not blind herself to the existence of the favourable impression made on her by De Bassenvelt's whole character and conduct, save in one solitary instance. This very seizure of her person, so cleverly accomplished, be the agency what it might, was, in the spirit of the times and of Theresa's romantic disposition, an event irresistibly pleasing and impressive. His chivalrous forbearance in keeping aloof from her, his energetic interference in her father's behalf, his bravery, his proscription, and Prince Maurice's friendship for him, all combined to excite her admiration. But there was one more deep-buried feeling in her breast, unknown to her, yet working towards the same end, in sure and silent effect, like the earth-fires that send up their heat from the heart of a volcanic mountain, to melt the snows upon its surface. This feeling is hard to be described, and most hard to be conceived by bosoms that beat like Theresa's, in a purity so perfect as not to comprehend their own work-

ings. It was engendered in the one wild moment when De Bassenvelt clasped her to him in that impassioned and unhalloved embrace, which seemed, by a power of nature more potent than cold decorum, to have endowed her with a mysterious sympathy—a yearning to see, in the broad light of truth and virtue, the being whom she had only known in gloom and guilt.

Such was the spell that did such secret service to the cause of De Bassenvelt. Had she known its nature she would have loathed herself, albeit most unjustly. As it was, she was at times startled, but not alarmed, to perceive her own leaning towards him whom she fancied she abhorred. But she never for a moment supposed that a rebel feeling lurked within her heart, to tamper with the allegiance it had so devoutly sworn to Lambert Boonen.

For hour after hour the cavalcade proceeded on its route; through the depths of the *Sonien Bosch*, across the broad plains of Waterloo, which had not yet been dyed with the blood-red tints of immortality, and passed the Sambre uninterrupted. Two stoppages, for refreshment sake, took place during the day; and long ere its close, the banks of the Meuse were gained, and Welbasch Castle high in view, towering in placid pride over the enchanting scenery spread far beneath its rocky basement.

During the whole of this day, Theresa's mind, uninterrupted by any external excitement, heaved in the tumult of self-impelled emotion, like the sea that swells during the profoundest calm, from the intensity of its own depth. Madame Marguerite's was as still and smooth as the shallow pool, that stands like transparent marble when no breeze ruffles its surface. She, in losing sight of the scenes that had excited her warm-watery feelings, relapsed into her usual mood of indolent content, and caressing Fanchon or chattering to Nona, she left Theresa to the indulgence of her own thoughts. And never had our heroine enjoyed such a combination of happy sensations as on that day. The troop of horsemen kept far in front, and its leader took especial care not to intrude on Theresa's presence. The momentary shudder of dread for her lover's safety was succeeded by a sentiment of profound security both for him and herself. A double delight (yet she knew not that it was so) filled her heart. Lambert Boonen was by her side. De Bas-

senvelt's imagined portrait was in her mind. A real and a fancied presence at once possessed her. She revelled in the rapturous union of fact and fiction. Every thought of danger or difficulty was absorbed. Her father's safety seemed as certain as her own. Lambert Boonen's love, De Bassenvelt's glory, her country's triumph, her own happiness, were the blended colours of the arch that spanned her imagined heaven; and she might as vainly have essayed to separate or define them, as might mortal vision the prismatic fiction that bends across the sky.

No teasing attentions, the marks of frivolous attachments, broke in on Theresa's mood. The apprentice rode quietly beside her, dropped behind at times, or now and then moved forwards; occasionally conversed with the cavaliers that formed the front and rear guards, and again, for long intervals, lapsed into silent inactivity. But he was never out of Theresa's sight. Yet even had she lost his view, she had not been alarmed; for she felt her spirit as indissolubly joined with his as are the invisible elements of nature with each other. She asked no more. When the apprentice did address her it was ever in some forcible phrase of tenderness and love; and in the apparent absence of anxiety for his own fate, in circumstances which might well have aroused it to excess, Theresa saw a deeper community of feeling than even yet had been evident between them. In the indulgence of sweet reveries, she passed the day; traversed the beautiful scenes which the route presented; saw the embattled fortress, which she looked on less as a prison than a home; nor felt one moment's check to this delicious flow of thought, till Madame Marguerite, after gazing awhile alternately at the castle and the apprentice, who rode somewhat in advance of the litter, abruptly yet quietly exclaimed, in her common-place tone, —

“Theresa, love, do you know I think I have discovered a secret! I am sure, and I stake my faith on the fact, that Master Boonen has betrayed us into the hands of Count Ivon de Bassenvelt.”

Imagination may fancy the pang that shoots through him who receives a serpent's tooth—the numbness which succeeds the sudden sting—the insensibility as the poison spreads. Such were the gradations of suffering that now assailed Theresa. The cavalcade had reached the river's edge. The

trumpets flourished, and the cannons roared. The stream was safely passed, the castle portals entered: the utmost state exhibited to give an air of triumph to the scene—the whole power of De Bassenvelt displayed before her—the tenderest assiduities of Lambert Boonen poured into her ear; but Theresa made her entry into this late-considered home, surrounded by every vassal circumstance of homage, as morally dead to all around as though her corpse had been carried to its tomb.

CHAPTER XIV.

ENTHUSIASTIC shouts in various languages of “A Bassenvelt!” “Count Ivon for ever!” “Liberty!” and the like, fell on Theresa’s ear with a stunning sound, as the litter slowly entered the castle courts; and hundreds of armed men appeared on all sides, thus boisterously hailing the return of their chieftain, the champion of that cause for which they were irrevocably pledged. The excitement of revolt had reached its highest pitch; and the regiment was roused to actual fury, on hearing of the indignity offered to their colonel by his being hung in effigy, and of the violent decree of proscription issued by the archduke against him and his followers, which intelligence had been promptly conveyed from Brussels the previous day. The garrison of Welbasch was now complete, by the return of De Bassenvelt with the large detachment that had been for several days hovering round Brussels and carrying defiance to its very gates; and they vociferated, as with a single voice, their desperate greetings, to him with whom they now entered on a struggle that they knew was to be of life or death.

In the midst of these reiterated shouts, the voice of the apprentice continued its efforts to assuage what appeared to him Theresa’s terror at the scene. He knew not how her feelings would have sympathised with it, had they not been thus temporarily paralysed. When she fully recovered her consciousness and self-command, she found herself, as she then deeply felt, utterly desolate; for the apprentice had left her side, and followed the persons who presented themselves to him, as guides to scenes which her bewildered imagination could only

vaguely picture but dared not attempt to define. When the litter had stopped, Theresa had mechanically followed Madame Marguerite's movements, and descended under the porch of the gothic arch, that led to the principal apartments of the castle. The apprentice's hand had aided her till she touched the ground, and just then he disappeared—recalling her to sensation by the very act of quitting her, and giving her mind free scope to understand the delusion under which it had suffered.

While Madame Marguerite busily and joyously entered into conversation with Father Jerome, the chaplain, who hurried to the porch accompanied by some female attendants and several of the males of the household, to do honour to the ladies, Theresa cast a searching glance through the groups around her. The apprentice as he disappeared seemed to remove the spell that his presence had imposed upon her; and her next object of scrutiny was to discover De Bassenvelt's figure, that she might at once throw herself upon his generosity, and intercede for the honourable treatment of him whom she had been the means of bringing into this peril: for, as the goblin lights of swamp and vapour expire in the first rays of morning, so did the agony of doubt that had flitted across her mind vanish in the dawn of returning reason. A quick transition of feeling sped through her mind. She saw, as by inspiration, the injustice of her temporary dread; and, for the instant, she scarcely knew which most to despise or hate the weakness that allowed her to be the dupe of Madame Marguerite's ignoble suspicion.

She could not succeed in discovering any one on whom she could fix as Count Ivon, amid the scattered throng that filled the courts; and as she recovered her self-possession, she was delighted to have been thus saved from the indignity of verbal supplication, which would at once have degraded and betrayed her. She calmly followed the invitation to enter, courteously made by the chaplain; and her mind gradually became more collected as she saw the delicacy of her reception. She and Madame Marguerite were ushered into one of the vaulted and gloomy rooms of state, while her worthy chaperone seemed as usual to have alighted in the very place that suited her best, like (not profanely speaking) the animal of seven lives that is sure to fall on its legs—and gave fluent vent to her delight at

the honours paid her. Theresa was spared the thick-coming anxieties which inaction in such a situation must have generated, by an announcement from Trinette (the modest hand-maid of Beatrice) that her mistress was in readiness to wait upon her as soon as she was disposed to receive her.

Theresa was taken by surprise, and a shudder of repugnance crept through her: but she promptly saw the necessity of submitting to circumstances; and she wished rather to hasten the meeting, which would enable her to appease the jealousy of which she suspected she was the victim, by a full avowal of her love for the apprentice. She would thus, she felt sure, at once remove the source of distrust in Beatrice and of danger to Lambert Boonen, and also satisfy her own mind as to the real character of De Bassenvelt. Other hopes were linked with this; the chief one was that of obtaining through Beatrice means of escape for herself and her lover. All this passed with magic rapidity through her brain; and she returned a message urging Beatrice's instant visit, ere the simple Trinette perceived that she had cogitated on the proposal.

At the announced approach of Beatrice, the pious horror of Madame Marguerite was raised to the utmost. She demanded of Father Jerome to be led instantly to her chamber; and hurried off, with Nona by her side, and Fanchon in her arms, muttering prayers for Theresa's preservation from the contagion she was about to risk. As she bustled through an outlet at one end of the state chamber, she heard another door at the opposite end creak on its huge hinges; and not daring to look back, lest the figure of the polluted novice should blast her sight, she suppressed a rising scream, and banged the oaken barrier behind her, with a noise that pealed through the lofty saloons and corridors.

Theresa, left alone in the spacious and gloomy chamber, but half distinct in the dusky twilight, started as she heard these desolate reverberations, and a chilling dread crept through her. She listened to the noise of the door through which she expected Beatrice to enter, as it was opened and then closed again; and she felt as though it were impossible to raise her eyes to the then degraded being she had so long known in virtue.

By a strong exertion of the will, in which pride was the chief element, she recovered her self-possession, and looked

up. But a pang of surprise and terror struck on her, at seeing before her, instead of the well known commanding figure of her former friend, in the characteristic costume of her sex, a person in male attire, of middle stature, and dressed in the full semblance of military life. Theresa would have fled—but the hopelessness of escape made her on the instant determine to meet the fate she could not successfully shun; and perhaps a half-formed notion urged her not to shrink from an interview with De Bassenvelt, who, she had no doubt, now stood revealed in his own person before her. With one hand supported on a marble table placed in the middle of the room, and the other on her throbbing heart, she drew herself proudly up, and stood prepared for results which she had neither power to control, nor time to calculate.

The figure stopped, and stood with hands extended in a gesture of mingled doubt and supplication, and the following words broke on Theresa's ear:—

“Do you not know me, Theresa? Or do you shrink from and shun my open arms? Does the memory of our last embrace in the convent garden awaken a new dread in you?”

It was indeed Beatrice who spoke these words, in tones which instantaneously quieted our heroine's alarm, yet, at the same time, made her bosom sink, with that sensation of void that accompanies the disappointment of even undefined desires.

“You know me not yet, Theresa?” continued the modern amazon. “Is my voice, too, changed, as well as my attire? Can you not recognise your old friend Beatrice in the disguise of manhood? Ah! yes—that glance speaks volumes—you know—you fear—and you despise me! Is it not so?”

“I do at last recognise her who was my associate and my friend,” replied Theresa, recovering her calm and somewhat proud demeanour—“let your own heart, if it be not, like your person, changed from nature's design, answer the rest.”

“Theresa, mark my words—and look full upon my face to see that my looks belie them not. There's nought to fear in me, and nothing to despise—had there been such, thou hadst not seen me here. Let our conference begin as it ought to do. We must know each other—thou hast much to learn, but little to tell me; for methinks I read thy inmost thoughts this moment.”

Beatrice, while speaking these words, advanced close to The-

resa, and removed the plumed cap that had shaded her face. Theresa's eyes, as if moved by irresistible command, were raised upon the countenance that at once courted her scrutiny and returned it, with a glance that seemed to penetrate her soul. She saw in the lofty bearing of the quondam novice an expression of high-wrought enthusiasm, such as she had not ever imagined, much less met with. But it was quite free from the tone of cold assurance, which is often seen in faces of loveliness that are joined with profligate minds and passionless hearts. The eyes of Beatrice swam while they beamed. Her brow was flushed, her lips quivered. Emotion spoke in all those eloquent signs; and Theresa could scarcely believe that she gazed on a being moved solely by mortal impulses.

"Yes," continued Beatrice, "I know what passes in thy mind—but I must undeceive thee. I love thee, Theresa, and have no rivalry with thee. And, trust me, thou mayst safely love me as of old, despite my male attire and my apparent abandonment of what the world calls virtue. Sit down, sit down, and calmly listen, while I open before thee a speaking leaf in the book of human nature."

With these words she laid her hand on Theresa's arm, with an air of gentle authority which the latter felt no wish to resist, for every look of Beatrice quieted her alarm and excited her curiosity. They sat down together on a huge bench, unbacked and cushionless, the general style of the antique furniture of Welbasch Castle. Yet, as our heroine gazed on her companion's face, she was awed by its highly excited expression; and she could not repress a lingering shudder, as she marked her military accoutrements and masculine attitude. She could scarcely believe she sat beside a woman, until Beatrice again spoke.

"Theresa, I read thy repugnance to my present state and demeanour. Nay, speak not, but hear me! In one word, then—I am as pure as when I first met thee in the convent parlour. Nothing has taken place to bar my privilege of sex; and may this sacred symbol of my race bear witness that I wear it undefiled."

She here threw open her doublet and exposed the curiously-wrought cestus that girded her waist, marked with mystic characters unknown to our heroine, who had, however, more

faith in the eloquent veracity of Beatrice's look, than in the mysterious voucher she invoked.

"Thus much," continued the latter, "I have said to calm thy scruples, but I scorn to profess them as my own. No! my mind was not cast in the mould of prejudice. It is free as the winds. It knows no limits, and obeys no laws but its own impulses. It holds no code for its own movements apart from the body it is linked with. As the affections and the person are inseparate, so should they be given together. This is not womanly in the notions of the world, nor in thine, Theresa; but the rigid fools who legislate for the free will of mankind know not the very elements they would fashion into systems. They draw distinctions of humanity, as if the mind knew differences of sex. They form one code for man, another for woman, as if genders were of the spirit, not the body. —Fools in their own conceit! they would circumscribe the unlimited, unfathomable soul. Young and innocent as thou art, Theresa, thou mayst not comprehend one theory of would-be wise ones; philosophers, forsooth, who prate of woman's nature. They say, that balked and thwarted in her love, she hates the object that excited it, and that vengeance thrusts affection from her bosom. Gross libellers of the female heart —how little do they know it! Listen to me, Theresa, — I loved, adored De Bassenvelt, when in a pilgrim's guise he came into our convent, marked me for his object, and won my heart and soul by the irresistible powers that no woman may withstand. Nay, start not, nor blush, Theresa; one day thou wilt acknowledge this. He won me, wholly, unreservedly; — I was his, without restriction or condition."

"Oh, Beatrice!"

"Hush! not a word of interruption! I cannot afford a moment's loss of time, in laying bare the secret workings of this breast. In space less long than other men might take to form a project on the heart, this man, Theresa, had wooed and won one that, methinks, is made of stuff less yielding than is common. None other possesses influence like this."

Theresa felt her bosom throb with a consciousness that gave the lie to this assertion; but she gave no interruption to Beatrice.

"Devoted to him as I was, knowing as I did, from his manly confession, that he had vowed himself to another, that

he could never be my husband, I threw myself on his protection, and fled from the thralldom to which the villain Trovaldo had doomed me — from the mockery of a religion repugnant to my nature ; but I forbear to shock thee. I fled in the full excitement of the belief that De Bassenvelt's breast was to pillow my own. I deny it not ; and were it required of me, I could justify, at least to my own conscience, a doctrine from which you, Theresa, revolt and shrink. But my destiny was other than my own impetuous passions longed for ; and the magnanimity of him I fled with gave me a higher doom than the love-sick voluptuousness into which I was prepared to melt. It is true that De Bassenvelt had spoken to me in the language of passion, and gained me for his own, by an impetuous approach to a heart undefended by any barriers of opposing principle or repellant scruple. I scorn to assume a virtue (if it be one) that I have not. De Bassenvelt's first designs were what the parlance of the world calls libertine — and he met a sympathy in the full throbbings of my ready heart. He was the first man I had loved — and when I say the first, I imply that he was the only one ; for apart from theories of the affections, or problems as to their extent, of this be assured, that she who loves De Bassenvelt — and to know him is to love him — can never love another. There is a magic in him, Theresa, that cannot be resisted ; not that which drivelling dolts, like our good chaplain here, believe in, but that magic of a mind which, self-impelled, bears down all obstacles — that magic of a heart swelling with passionate ardour — that will to do, which is the power of doing — that mighty combination of courage, warmth, and energy, which master-spirits alone possess, and which lesser beings bend to, as the forest branches to the rushing breath of heaven : such is De Bassenvelt."

As Beatrice spoke, her eyes beamed with enthusiasm ; but Theresa detected none of the tenderness of affection, such as moistened her own eyes or dissolved her heart. She could not help being carried onwards by the glow of her companion's words ; but she still seemed to shrink into herself at the picture of awful power possessed by that man, in whose grasp she felt as if girded.

" To such a being as this," continued Beatrice, " I confided myself. With him I spurned, as you saw me, the convent laws and limits ; and, when free from pursuit and persecution,

I sighed for the indulgence of the passion I had at once nourished and lived on. Then it was that the splendour of his character broke forth, and awoke in mine feelings and principles that were less ingenerate than the work of his power. His genius breathed on me, and called a full creation into life. He had never talked to me in puling phrase, nor wooed me with sighs and tears ; but his every word revealed high thoughts and aspirations, as stars that are discovered by the heaven-seers through the separate streams of their own light. He had thus prepared me for what, in a meaner mood of mind had been a shock, but which, sublimed as I was, was like a transfiguration from earth to immortality. In one word, Theresa, he saved me from myself ; spared me in the moment of his triumph ; and instead of sinking me below the level of my nature, he raised me high into the atmosphere of his own. But, oh ! how describe the gentle energy with which he checked my feelings, and turned them into a current of elevated passion ! instead of a harsh revulsion, changing heart and mind into bitterness, sensations and sentiments all expanded beneath his management, and became etherealised into an incense worthy of the idol before whom they rose. In that hour of ordeal, through which I came refined and regenerate, I devoted myself to nobler purposes than self-indulgence. It was then I vowed my life and energies to the two great objects of De Bassenvelt's existence. Thine eyes, Theresa, ask me what were those ? — thy heart anticipates and throbs to meet the answer. They were the deliverance of his country, and the possession of *thy* heart and person. Heaven's hand is working for the one, and manifold human means are labouring to secure the other. Brabant may yet be free ; and Theresa Van Rozenhoed *must* be the wife of De Bassenvelt !”

“ Oh, Beatrice, in mercy, in pity, spare me !” cried our heroine, grasping in her hands the arm that had half encircled her as Beatrice pronounced her last oracular sentence. “ Oh, if thy heart be indeed what thy tongue bespeaks it, — if thy woman's nature be not wholly changed, — be not accessory to so cruel a doom towards one who has done thee no wrong — one who supplicates thy protection. Good heavens ! what a fate is mine ! Day after day betrayed, entrapped into dangers and doomed to despair — victim of the bold designs of men who find too ready instruments in my own sex for my undoing !

Oh, save me from this dangerous man ! I tremble at the bare thought of encountering him. I at once admire and dread him. I follow his high destiny with wondering eyes, but dare not mingle myself with it."

"It is thine own, Theresa. Nature and fate have marked thee for De Bassenvelt, and him for thee. Ye move in the same course on to the same goal. He has stamped his influence on thee beyond the power of change. The surest authority that can speak to thee, thine own heart, must tell thee this ; and even couldst thou escape from it, thou wouldst not !"

These words seemed to penetrate the depth of Theresa's soul, and to hold up a mirror to her mind. She could not deny the reality so visibly reflected ; and she started back with affright at the apparition thus magically conjured up. Every thing seemed conspiring against her. Her father, the prior, Prince Maurice, Beatrice, all who had most influence on her — save one — and he ? — Was she sure of him ?

"Beatrice, Beatrice," she exclaimed, "I supplicate you by all you hold sacred and dear to deliver me from this peril. My whole resource is in you. I comprehend the high wrought feelings you have explained, and by which you are bound to Count Ivon ; and thinking of him as you do, you may well suppose you act for my good in lending yourself to his designs. But our cases are widely different. I look on him with awe and terror. I own his power, and feel it wound round me in many a subtle link, but I have no sympathy with what I am thus joined to. Besides, Beatrice, you will remember you confessed to me, even ere you quitted the convent, that De Bassenvelt was vowed to another."

"And wert not *thou* that other, Theresa ? Was it not to *thee* that he had vowed himself ? Not by the gossamer pledge of words, but in the solitude of his own soul — in the solemn depths of passion ! Was it not thy reputed charms that first led him to our convent walls — and was it not my close intimacy with thee that fixed his thoughts on me ? And, oh power of holy love ! was it not thou that worked such mighty influence in his breast, turning its fiery torrents into pure and limpid streams ! Was it not thou, Theresa, who, by the passive magic of thy virtue, transformed De Bassenvelt at once from the loose libertine he was, to the high-toned hero that he is ? Was it not thou who madest him win that

victory from himself, when I, in the rapturous warmth of woman's love, tempted and tried him to the core? Yes, this was all thy doing; and by this thou hast, all unconscious of thy power, raised two beings above their several natures. I say no more of what De Bassenvelt is,—and thou mayst see and judge *me* for thyself. Yet know my outward seeming does not mock my inward soul—for in the critical hour when De Bassenvelt told me he was thine, and proved to me it was thy power o'er him that engendered his forbearance to me, I made a deep and never to be forgotten vow of celibacy, not forced and false to woman's nature, but genuine, I hope, and generous. I had cast the outward covering of this form, and swore never again to clothe it in a woman's garb, till thou wert *his*, and Brabant free! A solemn oath, Theresa, taken before the shrine of a pure conscience, and registered in its inviolate resolves."

"Beatrice, Beatrice, all this is too much for me. I am overwhelmed by the rushing flood of circumstances. A fearful thrill moves through me. Were it mere terror, I could hope to shake it off—but, Heaven forgive me! I fear that delight is mingled with alarm. I cannot be ungrateful for, nor feign insensibility to, Count Ivon's passion—and was ever so strange a cause so strongly pleaded? How am I to resist this combination, and hold firm in my deep-pledged faith? For know, Beatrice, my secret must burst from me—know that another ——"

"Hush, hush, Theresa, nor murmur treason to the sovereign destiny that rules thee. I cannot list to aught that thou wouldest utter more. Thou art not here to battle with thy doom, but to fulfil it—nor I to have my mission thwarted or opposed. Fear nought, Theresa, a guardian power is over thee. Let no unseemly doubts assail thee. All will be well. De Bassenvelt is no common man, nor will he travel even to his own happiness by beaten ways. His thou must be, and his by his own means. Soon thou wilt see him in his true light. But until he throws himself before thee, in his own time, let no distorting colouring picture him as he is not. See every act of his as well devised and executed for thy good."

"My forcible seizure and present imprisonment?"

"To save thee from power and treachery. Here thou art safe from every harm that touches not De Bassenvelt's self."

“ Beatrice, thou saidst *treachery*. To whom did that foul word point? Twice already within two days has its sting pierced through me. What treachery am I saved from, in being trepanned to this strong hold of peril?”

“ At least from that of thine own fears, and doubts, and phantasies, Theresa — let that answer suffice thee. Be tranquillised and happy. Thy father’s safety is guaranteed. Thou art in the keeping of all that is brave and honourable. Thou shalt have all that tender friendship and exalted love can give thee — protection, and indulgence to thy heart’s most ample wish.”

“ Beatrice, thou hast rejoiced my soul, for thine own sake, but shaken it to its very base for mine; and there is one unnamed by thee for whom I tremble still. Let me but be assured that my father’s friend — and mine — is safe, and will remain so, and I can bear aught that may befall or is intended me.”

“ Follow me, Theresa, and see to his safety with thine own eyes.”

With these words, Beatrice rose from her seat, placed her plumed montero on her head, and holding her light rapier up to prevent its trailing on the floor, she moved across the apartment with measured strides, Theresa following, in that mood of uneasy and half fearful admiration with which children gaze on the disguises of a carnival.

Following the route taken by Madame Marguerite and her reverend conductor, our heroine was now led through sundry anterooms, saloons, and corridors, to the grand-staircase of the castle. As Beatrice ascended the broad marble steps, her spurs and iron-shod boots caused the only sounds that broke the stillness of the castle, for not even a straggling servant appeared; and all the bustle and noise of the garrison seemed concentrated in the courts without, the rude clamours of which were distinctly heard through the massive walls. Beatrice stopped on the first landing-place, from which various passages branched off from the main body of the building, and several doors led to the private apartments. One of those doors on the left-hand side was now opened by Beatrice; and as Theresa entered it, she said, —

“ These, my friend, are your quarters, in the garrison phraseology to which you must now become accustomed.

Here you will find every thing conducive to your comfort and that of your old kinswoman. When I say every thing, I must include the youth by whom you were accompanied. His presence will best answer for his safety, of which you seemed to have some doubts. I now leave you for this night. Tomorrow early I shall be with you again, and always when my coming is necessary or pleasing to you. Be these my parting words—rely on *my* friendship, be convinced of De Bassenvelt's magnanimity; and remember that self-confidence is the chief trait in that first quality of a hero! Good night, Theresa, and a bright and brilliant morrow for us all!"

An affectionate embrace closed this strange conference, which filled Theresa with the pure delight of a generous mind relieved from the belief in another's unworthiness. She gazed on the figure of Beatrice descending the stairs; and despite her repugnance for her bold and immoral opinions, she could not repress an admiration for her force of mind. She was confident in her sincerity, and satisfied of her having the power as well as the inclination to protect her; for Theresa felt as if Beatrice stood between her and De Bassenvelt's passion, which, so dangerous and dazzling in itself, came reflected through the medium of her advocacy in a way that our heroine could not but confess to be genial and soothing to her feelings. She was by degrees, but imperceptibly to herself, becoming accustomed to the consciousness of this passion, and she had been more than woman, and consequently beyond our sympathy, had she been unaffected by the homage of such a man, so flatteringly displayed.

In the anteroom to which the door admitted her was Trinettes, evidently awaiting her coming; and she was immediately introduced by this attendant into the chamber beyond. There she saw, with ineffable delight, the apprentice in conversation with Madame Marguerite; while Nona was employed in arranging various matters of furniture and articles of dress, which seemed to have been provided with most considerate liberality for the use of the fair captives. Unrestrained by any false or factitious check, Theresa rushed into the arms that were open to receive her; as heedless of the scruples that pursued her, as is a sea-boat vessel of the stormy gust from which she flies to some sheltering harbour.

The joy of the apprentice seemed almost to equal hers.

He appeared to read in her looks the evidence of the new temptation that had assailed her, and of his own influence that had repelled it. The sympathy with which she received his embrace was better than a thousand words. She ran over hurriedly the particulars of her interview with Beatrice—and softening down such parts of the latter's discourse as her modesty shrank from, she did not do justice to her own merit in resisting such a junction of temptation. But the apprentice gave a full measure of gratitude for this proof of her attachment, and while seemingly indifferent to his own fate, (and, as she thought, unjust to De Bassenvelt's magnanimous treatment of him,) he appeared only alive to her fidelity. His self-pride was at its height; and as he strained Theresa in his arms, gazed rapturously on her, and bent down his head close to her lovely face that blushed upon his bosom, he exclaimed again and again,—

“ This is indeed Love's triumph ! ”

Madame Marguerite raised her hands and eyes in shocked surprise at this scene, a palpable defiance of all the established laws of family pride and female prudery. Its chief actors seemed scarcely conscious of the good dame's existence, and two hours flew by in the rapid tautology of love. Seated in a recess of the chamber, the lovers seemed to have concentrated in it the whole of their thoughts, and cares, and feelings. Theresa opened, without reserve, the state of her mind, acknowledged her admiration for De Bassenvelt's conduct, and the casual impression made on her by his passion; but made ardent vows that she would never swerve from her plighted faith, or separate her destiny from him to whom gratitude and affection doubly bound her. She went even further than this. For, to remove any lingering doubt of his rival's influence, she declared her readiness to adopt any plan the apprentice might frame for flight from the castle; and her final intention, if that failed, to throw herself at De Bassenvelt's feet, and appeal to his chivalric and generous character, with a full avowal of her attachment.

“ And art thou indeed sure, Theresa,” said her lover, “ that when at last in De Bassenvelt's presence, in actual contact with his passion, raised from thy suppliant posture by his hands, and, it may be, clasped in his ardent embrace—art thou sure thou couldst even then resist, and—— ”

But the apprentice was stopped in the midst of his questioning by the painful effect it produced on Theresa. The recollection of what *had* passed between her and De Bassenvelt; that he had already anticipated the apprentice's surmise, and that she had been "in actual contact with his passion, clasped in his ardent embrace," rushed upon her with a sense of self-reproach and humiliation that quite overwhelmed her. She felt that she was hypocritically concealing from him with whom she should have no guile a circumstance which she believed had rendered her unworthy of his love. The mention of that memorable transaction rose to her lips. She was urged to the very point of its avowal—the words were starting forth—but a sudden incapacity of speech seemed to arrest their utterance, and a passionate burst of tears alone escaped her.

The apprentice, in his turn, seemed hurried on to the expression of some hitherto unuttered detail. He gazed for a moment intently on the weeping girl—then, as if irresistibly impelled by some strong emotion, he fell on one knee before her, and grasping her hands within his, he seemed about to speak—but starting up again, he paused a moment, then bent towards her, imprinted a kiss on her forehead, and said,—

“Even this, Theresa, I must endure—even thy unhappiness for a little while. Thy faith is undergoing an ordeal of fire—but even so it must be! In a moment not less critical than this thou profferedst a vow, which I would not then suffer thee to make. Just now I let thee utter it, but thou art again absolved! Thou hast been tried and hast resisted. But one more proof remains. Thou must see De Bassenvelt in his own person, not through the medium of princes' encomiums or woman's enthusiasm. Thou must see him in peril—in victory—in the absolute display of all that could make him worthy of thy love, or tempt thee to meet his passion. If thou canst still resist all that, and choose the lowly Lambert Boonen, instead of the high and proud De Bassenvelt—then, indeed, will I accept and glory in the heart which shall be given to love alone. The days of this thy trial are at hand. Events crowd thickly on. I shall be ever near thee—for I am assured of frequent, if not constant, access to thee. Let what may come of danger in this perilous place, it is at least a place of safety to thee, as long as life is mine. Escape is utterly impossible from such a strong-hold as this. We must

await the issue of the fate that has brought us here, and Heaven send us safe through it!"

Theresa, recovering from her embarrassment, and profoundly affected by all her lover uttered, would have replied in a strain to satisfy and soothe him; but the appearance of Paul Cuyper, the librarian and genealogist, who was invested with the duty of announcing the apprentice's hour for retiring to his own apartments, prevented any further interchange of words. Lambert Boonen retired; and Theresa and Madame Marguerite, taking possession of their separate but adjacent sleeping-rooms, parted in search of the repose which was as much needed by as it seemed impossible to our heroine. She felt no susceptibility for sleep. The exciting march of events seemed to raise her above the common weakness of nature. She received Nona's attention mechanically; but instead of repairing to the couch which invited her to rest, she entreated her faithful waiting-maid to occupy hers in the adjoining room; and then wrapping her mantle round her, she sat at the casement that looked down into the castle courts, and far beyond the walls across the river, and over the adjacent country.

The scene thus displayed before her in the soft light of a waning moon combined much that was picturesque and beautiful both in art and nature. The castle courts and parapets, in their varied light and shadow, were alive with the glittering beams reflected by arms and armour, as the soldiers moved along in busy preparation for the soon-expected attack. Galleries were in the act of being erected, with clattering sounds, across the more exposed parts of the works, where the besieging cannon, and the newly-invented bomb-shells, were most likely to be directed. Culverins, falconets, and ammunition barrels were heavily rolled along from station to station; and all the awful circumstances of coming conflict were combined with the loud voices of men, the neighing of horses, and the unceasing clash of arms. Figures half revealed, half hid in shade, were in motion at all points, conveying orders of preparation to each group of living machinery that moved in obedience to the pointed finger of command. As Theresa keenly gazed below, she thought she could distinguish Beatrice among these officers, in active communication between the others, and one who, by his shifting position from place to place, and being followed in each movement by several attend-

ants, she concluded to be De Bassenvelt, the chief of all this exciting combination, with whose fate she felt her own to be so involved, that the instinctive glance with which she followed his movements might be almost considered as bestowed on her own. But while this process of mental sympathy went on, her thoughts seemed still turned towards the lover to whom she had so solemnly bound herself; and the double union of which she thus formed a part caused a confusion of ideas and sentiments that seemed to envelope all in a shroud of indistinctness and doubt.

Theresa sat thus occupied, if the dreamy vagueness of this mood may be so called, until, by degrees, the bustling sounds below became comparatively still. The moon no longer looked at her own brightness in the liquid mirror of the Meuse, but had sunk in her downward course towards the distant forest. The whole aspect of the scene became changed. A drowsy depth of shade spread over all, as if nature itself were tired and irresistibly sinking to repose. It was then that Theresa distinguished, through the murmurs of the courts and ramparts, the melody of the nightingales, from the leafy depths of wood and bower with which the castle was surrounded. As the thrilling cadences were sent out, and echoed in answering throats that seemed surcharged with song, the tones of a human voice came gently on Theresa's ear, warbling an air so wild and in such strange harmony with the feathered choristers, that it was evidently the spontaneous inspiration of a musician whose whole heart was in sympathy with the scene. Theresa had not long to doubt of his identity. That well known, deep felt voice seemed to awaken, as an echo in her breast, its own sounds, that had slept there from the night on which she had before heard it. She listened, breathlessly and motionless, while the strain went on, adapting itself with exquisite taste to the translated imitation of a well-known canzonet of Maria Visschers *, and to every rise and fall in the swelling throats that ran its wild accompaniments.

Hark! does the nightingale
Wake the deep woods around,
And thrill the silent vale
With the soft touch of sound?

* A celebrated Dutch poetess of those days, most celebrated for her translation of Tasso.

Or does some lonely lyre,
Throbbing in every string,
Hold captive in its wire
The wind's sweet whispering ?

Is it a magic flute
That wildly breathes along,
While echo's self is mute,
Fearing to spoil the song ?

'Tis heaven's own airs that float
Downwards upon the breeze,
For sure no living throat
Could pour forth notes like these !

As the last word died away, and the warbling symphony of the night-bird alone was heard, Theresa could not restrain her words, but leaning forward from the casement, she exclaimed,
“ Oh, go on, go on ! ”

Responsive to this entreaty, the last stanza was repeated, in tones louder, and in cadences still more delicious than before. The very sentries who paced below stood still and listened : the voice came distinctly from a square tower that stood almost close to Theresa's casement ; and when it gave up the strain a whispered murmuring seemed to run round the angular projection, and it spoke as if uttered close to the listener's ear, —

“ Good night, good night, Theresa ; Heaven bless and watch thee ! ”

At the same moment a white handkerchief was visible to our heroine, as it waved through the increasing gloom. She returned the signal with her own ; and as she withdrew into the chamber, she exclaimed with a sigh, —

“ How sweet ! how delicious is his voice ; how pure, how exquisite his taste ! But are strains like these best suited to this hour of coming strife, and danger, and death ? Is not the trumpet's blast more fitting—more manly ? Alas ! alas ! why is not Lambert Boonen a hero as well as a lover ? Why is De Bassenvelt both ? And I—why do I feel the inspiration of his spirit stir in my ambitious and unsatisfied bosom ? ”

She flung herself on her couch, gazed on the glimmer of the expiring lamp ; and with the extinction of its flickering beam her wearied mind once more found forgetfulness in sleep.

CHAPTER XV.

THERESA's sleep was feverish and disturbed. She started from it at times, in doubt as to her situation ; and listened, to catch the sounds of the voice that still vibrated in her memory, the songs of the nightingale, or the harsh noises of warlike preparations. The tread of sentinels, and the tollings of the castle clock, convinced her of the reality in which she existed ; and an instinctive feeling (and a true one) suddenly told her that the considerate care of De Bassenvelt had silenced each rude impediment in the immediate neighbourhood to her repose.

Lulled by this flattering conviction she slept again ; and again she awoke, disturbed by she knew not what. She opened her eyes, and strove to look through the darkness around ; and just in that part where the faint starlight (for the moon was long before down) forced through the casement into the interior gloom, she saw a cloak-wrapped figure standing close to her bed. Our heroine was not one of those who scream on all occasions for help, or for—effect. She possessed remarkably that passive courage which so often avoids danger by restraining the appearance of fear. Her heart beat high, but she lay still and silent, even while the figure cautiously approached. After a short pause, in which the person appeared to lean forward as if to catch her breathing, the figure slowly rose, and, as it retired, Theresa fancied she distinguished its outstretched arms in the gesture of invocation, and she felt sure that a chaste and ardent prayer uprose for *her*. The figure was gone. The room was dark and still. She gazed out ; raised herself up ; and listened for a returning step, another breath — but in vain.

“ It is then De Bassenvelt ! ” murmured she — “ it is he who watches over, prays for — adores me thus ! What a miracle I have wrought in him ! What a wondrous being he is ! How can he enter here ? I saw no secret way — but no matter — it would be blasphemy to doubt the purity of such guardianship. Oh, Lambert, Lambert ! I must not forget thee the while ; nor risk, for both our sakes, to see or hear,

or, if possible, to think of thy mysterious, and ah how dangerous, rival!"

With highly excited feelings and heaving breast, Theresa lay in a state of musing unconsciousness betwixt slumber and waking, until the loud and near report of a cannon roused her from all uncertainty, and caused her to spring up in her bed: she saw her chamber lighted by the risen sun; but as she prepared to look from the casement, in uncalculating alarm, she shrunk back on perceiving a fully accoutred military figure sitting at her bed-side. It was Beatrice, who had gently stolen into her room, and who had watched her awakening, to soothe any fears which might be excited by the morning gun, and to prepare her for the much more serious alarms to be immediately expected. For Lieutenant Gallagher, with other scouts and advanced parties, had returned, during the night, with intelligence that the troops of the archdukes were approaching the castle in several directions, and that its almost instant investment was to be looked for.

"This is Count Ivon's doing — the suggestion of his delicacy," said Beatrice, after the first few words in which she relieved Theresa from her surprise. "Resolved not yet to approach thee, my friend, he has commissioned me to this task. And now be of good heart, Theresa. The hour of glory is at hand, for De Bassenvelt and all those who bask in the rays of his renown. Rise up, my friend. My tirewoman and thine own are ready to attend thee. Yet there is but brief space for toilette dalliance. And pray impress on thy good kinswoman within the need of quickened movements and content with scant attendance. War now shakes hands with time, Theresa, and leads him rapidly on. Oh, how my spirit is up in arms, and longing for this contest! Now, for a space, farewell, my friend. My duties call me hence. The chaplain, Father Ambrose, will do the honours of the breakfast board to thee and the worthy dame. Do with him as thou wilt, let him guide ye to all worth seeing within the castle, and to the best points of view for marking the glorious scenes that are to be enacted without. Mayhap, Theresa, thou mayst see me, too, in deeds not often done by women, and which, when done at all, are inspired by an influence that raises them beyond their sex. But enough of this. — Farewell!"

As Beatrice moved away, through a private door in the leather-covered wainscot, which she opened and closed by a spring, Madame Marguerite popped in her uncoiffed head at the regular entrance, and nodding it familiarly, she exclaimed, —

“ Well, Theresa, love, is not this delightful? Think of the archdukes having already sent their troops to rescue us! Depend on it, the marquess and the baron are at their head. How fine it will be to see the castle attacked and defended! Ah, many a lance will be bent and many a head broken in our quarrel! But I shall be really sorry when Count Ivon is taken; and Lieutenant Gallagher, too, he is a well-bred man, and of ancient race, no doubt. And so, after all, my dear, it turns out — for Trinette told me all about it — that this poor Beatrice is an innocent creature like ourselves; and that she only ran away from the convent to escape that brute Trovaldo, who had designs upon us all alike. Oh, the Turk! No offence to Count Gerard the Saracen, though, who, as they tell, put all those frightful turbaned heads in every corner of the castle. We must mind what we say in this place, for Father Ambrose assured me last night that the ghost of Count René the wizard, another of this mysterious race, performs its nightly incantations in one of the wings — this very one perhaps — as he used to do during his life in the fourteenth century.”

This was communicated in a deep whisper, above which Theresa had no wish to provoke Madame Marguerite's voice, for she knew that the living descendant of the wizards and Saracens of Welbasch Castle possessed facilities of hearing superior to his buried ancestors, and powers which she was disposed to consider to the full as magical.

“ Yes, Theresa, love, we must be very discreet in all we say or do here, although it is a fine old-fashioned feudal place, and a charming situation to stand a siege. How much I long to see a battle! The sight and the sound of war must be so pleasant, when one is quite safe in an impregnable castle, equally honoured by the besieged and the besiegers. Oh, heavens, what a horrid crash! Let us fly — let us hide ourselves! Oh! again! the walls are splitting!”

These sudden exclamations were caused by discharges of heavy ordnance from some of the outer works, against a party of the enemy that was making a reconnaissance close to the

edge of the river beyond, with a view towards commencing immediate approaches against the village and castle. These sounds were indeed the voice of war, opening on its victims, and hallooing to the charge its ready followers, danger, suffering, and death. Yet there is in that terrible voice an undefinable charm for those who have not witnessed its supervening horrors in minute detail. There are few breasts that do not confess an instinctive thrill of pleasure, as the roar of hostile cannons, or a rattling volley of musketry, breaks on them for the first time, inconsiderate not only of their own danger, but of the sufferings of others. Selfishness and sympathy are alike deadened at that wild moment ; and civilised man is for a space transformed again into his natural state. True to this feeling, and with every motive urging to its display, the garrison of Welbasch sent forth a united shout from rampart and battlement, that echoed far beyond the river which separated them from the foe. It spoke defiance and desperation in every tone. Repeated discharges from culverin and falconet swelled the fierce chorus ; and a thousand auxiliary noises from village and castle increased the uproar to the utmost capability of sound.

There was not even a woman's bosom within reach of these combined excitements that did not bound responsively. For women as well as men are the creatures of circumstances ; they sympathise in one age with what they may recoil from in the next. The prevalent feeling of those times even for them was bold and warlike. Instances of female heroism were of every day occurrence, such as were displayed by Sybilla of Cleves, the Princess of Epinoi, and others of their sex celebrated in history, and a parallel to which was now exhibiting in the actions of our Beatrice, who was among the first to rush to the river's side, with those who were ordered to cross it, in boats and rafts, and oppose the reconnoitring party that had advanced from the royal force.

While Madame Marguerite stopped her ears and shut her eyes, rather from silliness than fear, and soon uncovered and opened them again, more from curiosity than any high wrought feeling, our heroine felt herself at once to tremble and glow, as her heart throbbed high, and the blood seemed to run in circling eddies through her frame. Essentially feminine as she was, she was not insensible to the force of

habit. Like the generality of her sex in those days, she deeply enjoyed the feelings which the tilts and tournaments of a no distant epoch had fostered, and to which the gallant struggle with which she was herself identified had given a more ennobling impulse. But a more stirring excitement on the present occasion was her personal influence in its causes and consequences. She could not doubt that De Bassenvelt's patriotism was impelled tenfold by his passion for her. She saw herself, therefore, as it were, the inspiration of the deeds which his valour was now about to do — and she could not resist the enthusiastic forethought that success would crown the struggle. Elevated by the thought, all petty impediments to its indulgence ceased to exist, or were unheeded ; and she felt for awhile as if she could herself rush into the conflict, the glories of which seemed so peculiarly her own.

She little heeded the matin benison of Father Ambrose, who entered her chamber, a breviary in one hand and a crucifix in the other, muttering together his broken prayers for safety and imperfect invitation to breakfast. She entreated him to lead her to some place whence she might distinctly mark the scene of combat, her own and Madame Marguerite's apartments being chosen, by Count Ivon's orders, in the southern wing of the castle, which commanded a beautiful view of the river and country towards Dinant, but was quite free from exposure to the enemy's approaches.

The chaplain, with much wonderment at this request, obeyed it nevertheless, and piloted Theresa, who was followed by Madame Marguerite, Nona, Trinette, and other female attendants, to the picture gallery, which stretched along the whole of the western front, looking down on the village and river, and right into the positions which the enemy were now rapidly taking up. Theresa hastened to a window and gazed on the animating scene. The objects that first caught her attention were the inhabitants of the village, which poured out its entire population, flying towards the protection of the castle ; every one carrying some object most precious or most portable, a child, a bed, a bundle of clothes or linen, or fragments of motley furniture from the dear loved homes now abandoned ; while several drove before them cows, pigs, or flocks of poultry, all sending forth discordant sounds of affright or discontent.

Notwithstanding the smoke that now rose from the oft-discharged ordnance, the river shone in the full beams of the morning, and the sky glowed brilliantly above. The woods looked fresh in the bright livery of spring, and nature seemed to smile on the rude efforts by which man would strive to deface her perennial charms. As far as the eye could reach, the hostile troops were visible, advancing along the causeway on the left-hand side of the river, and deploying from the forest beyond, artillery, cavalry, infantry; while numerous ammunition and baggage carts, and camp equipage of every description, were evident in various directions; and the cornets and trumpets of the advanced guard sounded so close to the river side, that the rocks which formed the castle basement echoed back their summons as if in mockery. Several shots from arquebuss and carbine were fired across the river at the flying inhabitants of the village, by the royalist skirmishers who had lodged themselves in the little alder copse. It was at those assailants that the first piece of cannon was discharged from the castle; and the effects of such a shot have been thought worthy of record in the pages of history. It killed two brothers, Spaniards, who belonging to different regiments had just met at that spot, and were embracing when the fatal bullet tore its way through both their bodies. This chance incident produced a powerful effect on the feelings of the besiegers. They were inflamed beyond the common excitement of war. Each soldier seemed invested with a closer brotherhood than that of arms to the unfortunate pair; and the dead bodies, locked together, and left exposed to view for several days by the orders of Trovaldo, worked on the minds of the whole army to such a pitch, that each and all considered the quarrel less as a political contest than a family feud.

Theresa followed, with anxious eyes, the detachment of the castle troops in the act of crossing the river, in boats and rafts that were ready constructed for the sorties of the garrison. These were furnished with breast-works of wicker, covered with leather and stuffed with wool, which afforded protection against musketry; and the soldiers and horses thus ferried safely over quickly commenced landing under cover of the castle guns, which continued their discharges with increasing vigour. A fierce opposition on the part of the royal troops in the copse, who every moment received strong reinforce-

ments, now took place. The Spanish and Italian pikemen, shining in steel cuirasses and helmets, first offered themselves against the cavalry, and met on their terrible weapons horses and riders, as they splashed through the sedge and mud, and forced their way up the sloping banks. The dismounted dragoons, who in other parts leaped from the boats, and were less affected by those weapons, soon gained a footing, and drove back the pikemen by discharges from their heavy muskets. As these veterans retired through the copse, a line of Walloon arquebusiers were distinguished by their slouched hats, loose sleeved coats, wide breeches, and high-heeled and square-toed shoes. These troops, always among the best in the royal armies, now boldly opposed themselves to their fellow-countrymen, indifferent, like true mercenaries, to the patriotic shouts from De Bassenvelt's men; and in return for loud appeals in the name of their country, glory, and liberty, they sent back a steady volley, with the silent apathy of veterans fighting for mere pay. Cheered on by their officers, and burning with indignation, the black hussars paid back this compliment with interest; and they soon cleared a way for the mounted troopers of their corps, who now landed without much impediment, formed, and charged the opposing squadrons, which came gallantly up in every direction.

"Oh, for Heaven's sake," cried Theresa to Father Ambrose, who stood muttering prayers at her side, "name to me those various officers who lead on *our* troops so bravely! — tell me who is he who now gallops on in front, with his lance in its rest? — who that one who waves his sword over his head? — who —"

"Softly, softly, young mistress; and to the best of my skill, and as far as weak eyes will admit, I will point out our gallant captains to you. But methinks such a scene——"

"Quick, quick, then, good father! Now tell me his name yonder, engaged with those three cavaliers?"

"Let me see, let me see—Saint Michael be my safeguard, what a smoke there is! how it rolls across the stream! Eh? he with the lance in rest?—he waving his sword?—he?—but in sooth these suits of black armour are so marvellously alike, I find it difficult——"

"Oh, father, you are too tedious—pardon me, but all is

shifting and changed each second. Holy Virgin! one is down—horse and rider together! Another! Oh, how the lances shiver in splinters, and the rapiers strike fire! Now, father, tell me, oh tell me, who is *he*? Is that Count Ivon?"

"Bless and protect us, child!" exclaimed Madame Marguerite, "how can Father Ambrose distinguish him you fix on? you are pointing to a hundred warriors at once."

"How light, how graceful is his bearing! What a beautiful horse! Yes, yes, it is he—it is the leader of yesterday's escort—I know him by his Arabian steed," uttered Theresa.

"Ay, ay, now you are right, indeed, fair daughter; that is Rolando, Count Ivon's own charger—God send him safe, amen!"

"Amen, amen!" cried Theresa, clasping her hands and leaning out of the open casement; and then in the ardour of the moment she tore the scarf that had loosely covered her neck, and waved it into the air, in exultation and encouragement to the valour that hurried her on.

"Oh, these are shocking scenes, and this a dreadful place! Let us retire, good Father Ambrose, to a more suitable situation—to our eating room, in fact, for the body requires support under such wasting events. Come, come, Theresa child! you are exposing yourself sadly. What will Baron Lyderic or the marquess say if they distinguish you? Come, come!"

To the part of this remonstrance thus addressed to our heroine by Madame Marguerite no attention was paid; but Father Ambrose sympathised too keenly with that which appealed to him to delay his reply. The worthy chaplain was too familiar with scenes of rude warfare, in the distracted state of the province, to feel much alarm at the tokens of contest which did not involve his immediate safety, and he gladly led the way towards the solid consolations which Madame Marguerite's agitation required. But Theresa resisted every persuasion to retire from the place she occupied. Absorbed in the scene on which her eyes were rivetted, she only entreated to be left alone; and as her entreaties were considered by Madame Marguerite and Nona very much in the light of commands, she was soon left the sole occupant of the picture gallery, all the attendant females retiring in the train of the chaplain.

Leaning on the window frame, she still intently watched the fluctuations of the combat, which became each moment more animated and more confused, smoke and dust enveloping in great part the soldiers of either party, who were mingled indistinguishably together. The painful and sickening details of the fight were thus quite concealed from her, while the clash of arms, the shouts, the trumpet blasts, all that was exciting, was distinctly borne along, in the intervals of the artillery peals or the sharp rattle of musket shots; but the wounds, the blood, the groans and execrations were neither seen nor heard.

Unconscious equally of time or space, or her own sensations, Theresa participated in the scene, in which she was in heart and mind as much an actor as though her person had partaken of every shock which in spirit she sustained; and she was aroused, as from the midst of the conflict, by her own name softly whispered behind her, in a voice at all times so strangely magical, as to harmonise with every other tone, no matter how extraneous, or how seemingly discordant. She turned as truly and as tremblingly as the needle to the pole, and, with an animated gesture of recovered consciousness, she convinced herself that she gazed on the apprentice.

"Oh, Lambert, Lambert! Art thou here once more? Heaven be praised! How long have I forgotten thee!" exclaimed she, meeting full half way the proffered embrace.

"Forgotten me!" replied the lover, with a look more incredulous than reproachful.

"Yes, yes, indeed I had forgotten thee, almost entirely for hours past. I confess it, in shame and sorrow. Oh, Lambert, thou must not leave my side. I am beset with strange temptations, and I want thy aid to keep me firm and faithful. I do, indeed I do."

"Temptations, Theresa?"

"Ay, almost irresistible. From that sweet hour last night in which I was lulled to rest by the melody of thy song, I have not ceased to be assailed by all that is most hard to resist—a mysterious agency, at once awful and insinuating, and a combination of high and splendid excitements that carry me beyond *our* sphere. Oh, Lambert, listen to those sounds—look at yonder scene of glory—are they not inspiring? Is

not each one that mingles in heroic deeds, himself a hero? And *he*, the chief of all, the master spirit that all obey, what must we not acknowledge him? You answer me not. Oh, call to mind the magnanimity he shows towards you, and deal back to him a fair measure of liberality."

"Dost thou, my beloved one, then look for more than mortal power from me? Wouldst have me foster in thy breast the dangerous influence you confess? Is not this too much, Theresa?"

"Oh, Lambert, how little dost thou know my heart! I but ask thee to aid me in stifling this torturing influence that I myself cannot conquer. Didst thou at once act towards De Bassenvelt in the spirit he shows towards thee, that instant would this influence on my imagination cease to exist. It is thy jealous diffidence in me, and thy fear of him, that makes his rivalry of moment."

"Theresa, be convinced that what in De Bassenvelt appears magnanimous is less than it appears. He fears me not—and haply he trusts in the dazzling glare of those qualities to which thine avowal proves thee so susceptible."

"I do confess myself affected by what I have heard and what I see of his character and conduct. I should be less than mortal were I not so. But oh, how I am this moment fearless of all his power! Thy presence is my talisman. With thee beside me, Lambert, I can think and talk of Count Ivon as calmly as of one of this long file of ancestors of his that lines these gallery walls. Then quit me not again. Let us avail ourselves of his pride, his confidence—no matter what, that leaves us so unfettered. Let us seize on some fortunate moment in the midst of these alarms to escape from this place of peril. Rather would I trust to the double dangers of Trovaldo and De Roulemonde's pursuit than to the secret power of him, who, unheard and unseen, and leaving me nominally free, yet holds me in virtual thralldom and transforms me, from the mere woman that nature meant me for, to the excited participation of scenes like that."

She pointed towards the casement; and as if ashamed of her late sympathy with battle, or scared by its increasing tumult, she at the same time hid her head in the ready refuge of her lover's bosom.

At this moment the loud blasts of trumpets and the beat of drums sounded the peculiar signals for retreat. The apprentice, as if aroused by the very spirit of that sympathetic curiosity from the betrayal of which Theresa had just shrunk, sprang towards the casement, in the direction of which his eye had, in his own despite, been wandering during the whole of the preceding colloquy. He drew our heroine with him in his apparently involuntary movements, and they both gazed intently and silently for a few minutes on the scene of conflict.

"Oh, heavens!" exclaimed Theresa, "the castle troops are retreating—see how they fall back on the river—how the cavalry reembark—how their assailants press forward in overwhelming force! All is lost—all is lost!"

"Nay, nay, Theresa, thy warlike tact is poor indeed. Even I can see that this has been a mere skirmish—a challenge to the conflict. The garrison troops but show signs of what they are prepared to do anon. Their few skirmishers are retiring upon the fortress, before the besieging force. This has been nothing,—a mere prelude."

"Oh, God, then how dreadful the battle-piece itself will be! How could I sympathise with even these opening horrors! Oh, take me hence, my friend! Let us fly from a scene repugnant to both our natures. Forgive me, Lambert, if, led away by bolder fancies than beseem my sex, I have forgotten awhile the example of thy gentler taste. I know it abhors these rude pursuits."

"Glorious and gallant, by heavens! Well done, well done!" was the emphatic exclamation that interrupted Theresa; and as it burst from the apprentice's lips, he struck his palm with force on the granite ledge of the casement. Theresa started in astonishment. He quickly turned to her; and, with cheeks still glowing in the impulse that had inspired him, he tenderly and smilingly said,—

"Ah, Theresa, if thou hast felt this influence, how could I escape it? If I am thus moved by what so powerfully excited thee, 't is but fresh evidence that nature meant us for each other. Every hour strengthens that sweet conviction, and each new assay that tries thy truth will bring it brighter and clearer through."

"See, Lambert, see," said Theresa in a whisper, "he

comes back — mark him yonder, on that beautiful charger which you looked at yesterday with such admiration, and as he headed the escort that brought us prisoners here. That is De Bassenvelt — the chaplain pointed out him and his steed to me just now — he comes towards the castle — look on him — mark him well — thy daring, but *now* how harmless, rival, Lambert. He winds up the way to the courtyard — but I must not let my eyes turn there — I will not be tempted.”

“Thou art right, love,” said the apprentice, with a playful smile and satisfied tone; “to shun temptation is the surest part of virtue. But thine must yet be tried, Theresa; so look out, sweet, on this brave troop and its leader.”

“No, no, ’t would ill beseem me, prisoner and woman both, to court the gaze of these stern warriors, and of him whose delicate forbearance teaches me so good a lesson. But do thou, Lambert, closely watch Count Ivon as he comes — tell me what like of man he is — look full and fearlessly upon his face, and see if his mind speak visibly there. I am curious to know what you think of him whom, please Heaven, I may never see or know. Oh, that we were now far from these walls, in some remote and silent spot, sequestered from the world and its too tempting toils!”

“Enchanting girl! Thy frankness and purity speaking thus, is of more worth to me than conquerors’ wreaths or monarchs’ treasures. To win and wear thy love in this full breast is glorious emulation. I *will* do somewhat worthy of the prize. It shall be mine, by conquest as by gift. I cannot take the treasure thou wouldst give me until I have proved me worthy of the trust.”

“And art thou *not*, my friend? What can enhance the value of thy fond and faithful heart?”

“Theresa, ’t is not enough, in days like these, and in thy peculiar case. Thy father looks for more, and he shall be satisfied. Some service to my suffering country, some marking deed in the bold struggle now on foot, shall stamp my right to claim thee at his hands. But yet proof is wanting that no delusion acts on your young and ingenuous mind. Thou believest that thou lovest me — nay, spare me that expostulating glance — ’t is but belief, Theresa — for thy constant admission

proves that when removed from thy sight I am no longer in thy mind."

"Oh no, oh no — thou must not say so, Lambert, thou art always in the depths of my true heart. The glare that dazzles me when thou art absent is indeed a delusion, cheating me with visionary forms, and blinding me to the reality of what I think and feel."

"Then mark me yet again, adored one — the love that thou shouldst glow with, the love that alone can satisfy me, is yet to be established. That all its elements are in thy breast, 't would be ingratitude to doubt. But I must see and know it rooted there, Theresa, spreading its foliage through thy inmost soul, and with the perfumed screenery of its fruits and flowers excluding every influence but mine own. Such is the true and only rightful love. The common tests, absence and time, but nourish and confirm it. Can *thy* love stand those tests, Theresa? Yes, yes, — say yes, sweet girl, and let me put thee to them. It may be, I am refining on this passion, and am trying thee too much, but bear with and meet my wishes. Consent to my withdrawing from thy presence for awhile. I occupy apartments in the tower close to thine own. The Wizard's Tower 't is called, for there, they say, Count René, a far-back ancestor of this line, lived and died in the practice of magic arts. Thence shall I watch thee by day, and sing to thee by night, myself the while unseen. There, until liberty be given me to join in some such enterprise as I resolve on following, I shall be near thee, like a guardian spirit, ready to come at thy call, but sparing thee the influence of my actual presence, and giving thee full means to prove and know if thy heart be mine indeed, or if 't is but that presence that makes thee believe it so. Thou art assured of all honour here. But if aught should go wrong, if a murmur or a thought should make thee *need* me at thy side, thy scarf tied round the cross-bar of thy casement will bring me to thee, ere time could serve to answer the signal. Thus wilt thou pass the ordeal I require. For if thou canst, alone and unsupported for even the briefest space, be true to the poor and prisoned apprentice, despite the blandishments of De Bassenvelt's proud suit. 't would be ungenerous to thee, insane towards myself, to seek or wish for more. Speak now in answer, my Theresa. Speak

and confirm the enthusiastic delight with which I anticipate thy words."

While the apprentice spoke, Theresa listened with a profound and varying interest. Conflicting feelings were aroused. Pride, conscious truth, and warm affection rose by turns. Compacts like that proposed were nothing strange in those times, when the romance of chivalry had lost its rudeness, and an overstrained finessing in affairs of love was the constant cause of bitterness and woe. Theresa could not, in honour, as she felt it, shrink from the probation required. And the stern spirit of the age repressed all weak display of fond anxiety. She felt the truth of much of the apprentice's misgivings. She acknowledged it due to him and to herself to give some proof of the passion which had at times been wavering. She felt a deep sense of security in the close neighbourhood of her lover—and in the conviction, which even then forced its way upon her, that all that was generous and noble must take place on Count Ivon's part. She seemed imbued with the spirit of his lofty confidence in himself; and the whole dignity of her mind pressed her to meet and triumph in the ordeal that she was urged to.

"Lambert," said she, in tones more resolute and less subdued than were her wont in speaking to her lover, "thy appeal to all the better feelings of my mind is answered. I am ready to meet thy proposal—ay, this very hour. It is but just and well beseeeming to us both. Even in this hour of wild alarm and dubious warfare, amid the tumults of this siege, with doubt and mystery shrouding my fate, I will enter on the trial you invite—unsupported but by my own heart, and my reliance in thy faith, and on his honour. I consent to the necessity of this privation. But thou wilt watch over me—I know thou wilt—thou wilt not be idle in the Wizard's Tower, Lambert—thou wilt not forget my father's still doubtful state? Thou wilt find means of communication with him, and thy uncle, too? I dare not suggest to thee to leave this place, even for a day, in the face of these dangers; but tidings thou mayst obtain of those so dear to us. Oh, Lambert, profit by the liberty thou mayst command, and find the means of evasion. I cannot shake a bad presentiment from my soul that this parting may be wider and more lasting than we mean.

it. Forgive, oh, forgive, a weakness that will steal on my woman's heart ! I know not what it is, but a reptile terror creeps through my soul, oppressing me with a loathing sense of ill. Is not this moment awful ? In spite of my factitious elevation, I now confess it. This din of arms—this warlike clangour. Oh, Lambert, do not, do not abandon me ! I would be firm—I *will* be, if possible. But remember thy promise—the signal scarf will bring thee to my side. Thou wilt let me hear thy voice as last night brought it to me, constantly, too ! How faint of spirit I feel ! Heaven send me happily through this trial ! 'T were well it were begun—even now then let us part. To thy tower, Lambert, and leave me here awhile. I dare not trust myself with thee longer, or in sooth I doubt my resolution. Leave me, then, for mine honour's sake and thy own satisfaction."

"The love that meets no trials can gain no triumphs, Theresa. The bliss of well-proved confidence shall reward us both for this. In that delightful hope I part from thee ; but we shall not be separate, though asunder. Our spirits shall meet and mix together. My guardian care shall be with thee—my voice shall cheer thee—and my presence shall not thwart or bias thy free choice. Thus acting, I feel myself rise higher than my station, and some deed may haply prove me not altogether worthless. Thus I retire from thee for awhile, Theresa. I hear the clattering of booted feet upon the stair. This way leads to my quarters in the Wizard's Tower, of which I have free range and ample occupation. Adieu, my best beloved ! Rest confidently on my love, my honour, my devotion. Let not the sights and sounds of war appal thee. This castle laughs to scorn the opposing force. And well I know the gallant, glorious Maurice is at hand, with mighty means to chase yon braggarts hence. Farewell, farewell, Theresa ; I leave thee in safe and sure guardianship.—Farewell !"

The tender embrace that accompanied these words had no power to warm the frame or raise the feelings that were all benumbed with the shock of separation, as the apprentice withdrew from the picture gallery and left our heroine alone in its drear solitude. She could not weep. Thought was paralysed. All the excitements which so lately had roused

her were now powerless and dead. She heard the trampling of steeds in the court-yard, the trumpet blasts, the still continued roll of the artillery, but heard them all unmoved. She felt that De Bassenvelt was within view, had she but gazed from the casement into the court below. Yet she would not, could not, venture to look down. She sat fixed and motionless on a bench, in a tapestried recess ; and looked as though sculpture had lent one lovely specimen of its art, to shame the grim display of painted monuments that hung around.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

VOLUME THE THIRD.

CHAPTER I.

THE days that had so rapidly passed since the arrival at Welbasch of Aben Farez, as the Moriscoe was now universally called, were filled with all the bustling preparations for warfare ; and secret expeditions took place, in which De Bassenvelt himself with many of his confidants were actors. They all played their parts at his bidding, without enquiry into his plans or motives. His designs were impenetrable even to those by whom they were so often accomplished. All seemed to succeed ; and it appeared that neither persons nor events could withstand him, when he wished to gain over the one or command the other. Stratagem was as natural to him on fit occasions, as was intrepidity, even to recklessness, when his purpose required it. While intently pursuing his designs on Theresa's heart, which he chose to obtain by a system of romantic and chivalric tactics, so usual in those days, he at the same time followed up his public duties with a zeal that seemed to speak him wholly devoted to them. Returning in triumph to his castle with her, the great object of his heart's solicitude, he brought back a mass of information on the plans of his enemies and assailants gleaned with such accuracy as to make it appear that he must have mixed in the very councils that plotted his destruction. His chief agent was the Moriscoe, who was now constantly seen at his side, in the graceful costume of his ancient race, adopted by Count Ivon's full and ready approval. There was, however, one deep and dangerous agent at work against him, which all his energy, courage, and talent could not circumvent. *Ingratitude*, that first-born of envy, which a noble mind can never guard against, because it only imagines its existence when writhing under its attacks, this base passion was not negatively opposing De Bassenvelt's progress, but actively working his ruin. When he dismissed

Lyderic from Welbasch Castle, in consequence of Beatrice's exposure of his designs on her, he did so with regret, but scarcely with animosity. He made allowance for the temptation thrown in Lyderic's way ; and the peculiar nature of his own feelings towards Beatrice, left him less susceptible of enmity towards one who looked on her with different views.

De Bassenvelt, in the spirit of mere adventure, had penetrated the convent sanctuary of St. Anne, to see with his own eyes the Heiress of Bruges, of whose praises he had heard, with a curiosity that he was resolved to gratify. No sooner did his looks fix indeed upon her exquisite beauty, than he inwardly swore to possess it for himself. But the long indulged libertinism of his former character was at once extinguished by the birth of this one and only pure passion. He gazed on Theresa with sensations hitherto unknown to him, and he either dared not, or would not, approach her in the common form of wooing. He secretly vowed himself to her ; and to be informed of her character and disposition, to enjoy the delight of listening to her praise, he devoted his attentions (during his sojourn in the convent as an invalided pilgrim returned from the Holy Land) to Beatrice, who, as he learned from the garrulous porteress, was her chosen and intimate friend.

De Bassenvelt soon entered into the nature of the novice's enthusiastic mind. He was resolved to make it subservient to his views on her friend, and at the same time to rescue her at all risks from the dangerous and hateful position in which she herself was placed. His hitherto irresistible powers were not doomed to be baffled in this new project. He skilfully addressed himself to Beatrice's peculiar turn of thought ; and he so mixed the language of gallantry with a loftier tone, that he won her to his highest purpose, while she only believed that she was lending herself to the lowest. Her conversation with Theresa will have already explained the purport and the result of Count Ivon's conduct towards her. Suffice it to say, that when he had safely secured her from the fate she was threatened with, and for his deep-laid scheme for gaining Theresa's person and heart, he only felt towards her as an ardent friend, doubly devoted to her by her disinterested and almost sublime attachment to him ; and by the deep regard

excited in such minds as his for those whom they have saved from danger or served in distress.

He sent Lyderic on his mission to Bruges, but not in that foolish confidence which at first it might have appeared. It has been seen that De Bassenvelt had powerful aid to back his suit, and thwart any treachery on the part of his *ci-devant* friend, with means of observation on his conduct to counteract what they could not prevent. But although informed of much of that conduct, certain that Lyderic did "play him false," and with strong evidence that he was in league with his worst foes, he could neither bring himself to inflict the death which his letter threatened to the false one, nor yet to believe in the possibility that he would push his designs against him to the very extremity of ruin. Like every generous mind, he had his moments of almost wilful blindness. He knew that he rested on a volcano; but he could not, he *would* not, imagine that Lyderic's was the hand to place a torch to its slumbering fires.

Nevertheless, Lyderic de Roulemonde was now in the full exercise of his new appointment, as second in command to Don Juan de Trovaldo, of the forces specially destined for the siege of Welbasch Castle, and pursuing, with demoniac depth and energy of purpose, measures for its destruction, as well as that of its owner. It will be remembered that he boasted to the governor of Bruges, who was then his gaoler, but now his general, of his familiar knowledge of all the subterranean ways of the castle. He well knew the different stations where stores and ammunition of all kinds were kept, and also of the intricate windings which gave access to them; and it will be seen with what effect he availed himself of this knowledge, communicated to him in full confidence by his best friend.

From the very first demonstrations exhibited by the assailing troops, it was evident that the siege would be carried on in a spirit of inveterate vigour.

How that was to be accompanied by remorseless perfidy shall presently appear.

In the mean time, Prince Maurice was employed with his usual activity, availing himself of events, and aiding their action by the abundant resources which so peculiarly distinguished his character. From the hour of his quitting Bruges, under the safe guidance of Van Rozenhoed, the prior, and their emissaries, he had not ceased a moment from his exer-

tions in the great cause. He soon joined his small army close to Bommel, and he presented himself almost alone in the camp of the revolted royalists. These, struck by the boldness of the measure, and captivated by the prince's brave and chivalric bearing, went over, to a man, into the service of the states of Holland, and surrendered the important fort of St. Andrew into the prince's hands. This great object obtained, Maurice continued to act with consummate prudence, on a system which was speedily to be developed to his astonished enemies. The prolonged defence of Welbasch Castle was of infinite importance to his plans, as it occupied a considerable portion of the archduke's scanty army; and De Bassenvelt swore not to surrender, while enough of its walls remained standing to shelter the last remnant of his regiment. Measures were taken to procure large supplies of provisions to meet the wants of the thronged garrison, now considerably increased in number by the crowds of villagers and peasants who sought refuge within the castle, from the furious enemy that scoured the neighbourhood around. Frequent sorties and continual attacks went on; while the slow but steady progress of sappers, miners, and engineers, formed the under-current to the flood of open warfare which daily carried fresh victims to the ocean of eternity.

The siege had lasted a dozen days, every one of which had been filled by active and deadly operations. The approaches of the besiegers were already pushed, with a promptness common in those times of assault and battery, within the nearest possible limits. Not only were their works erected close along the river's edge, but possession was taken of the abandoned village, by a force which repeated attacks from the garrison failed to dislodge, and which was completely sheltered against any discharges from the castle ramparts, by the interjacent mass of perpendicular, and in some parts overhanging, granite. Between the attacking cannon, however, and the castle ordnance, a ceaseless roar of hostility was kept up; while demolished constructions on the river's bank, and shivered fragments of wall and rock, bore witness to the efficacy of each loud-mouthed retort. Covered by this incessant cannonade, each desperate repetition of attack and sortie went on; and every inch of ground lost and won was saturated with blood.

On the evening of the twelfth day, Don Juan de Trovaldo, Lyderic, and Barochio, the Italian engineer, (so celebrated for

his exertions during the memorable siege of Antwerp, fifteen years before,) stood, with several officers of the staff, on a knoll that commanded a full view of the village and castle, and was within range of the guns from the latter. They gazed, more or less intently, on the labours of a body of pioneers and sappers, who, sheltered by the village defences, and quite unseen from the castle, were busily bringing into play an elaborate mass of hydraulic machinery, which stretched from the river into a small aperture high up in the granite wall. Each leather hose, or pipe, or spout, which connected the engines together, was directed in its course by sockets, guys, and pulleys of manifold complicity. At the application of each, Barochio burst into restless exclamations of approval; while Lyderic watched every movement with his sidelong look, and that nibbling of the nether lip, so indicative of base anxiety.

Trovaldo, jealous of Lyderic's interference in the conduct of the siege, and affecting to despise the intricacy of those scientific tactics which he was forced to tolerate, by the special orders of the war minister, showed comparatively little interest in what was going on. He paced the knoll from side to side, with folded arms, and a scowl of low-spirited indifference. He watched the proceedings, like a sullen sentry, as a point of duty, but not as if they inspired him with any sympathy. The artillery was playing its usual fierce accompaniment to the silent doings of the engineers; and some random shots from time to time ploughed up the earth, or made their rough passage through the groups of chestnut trees that ornamented the spot. On these hints, several of the officers, particularly Barochio and Lyderic, cowered low behind the loose breast-work thrown up at the foot of the hillock, and peeped cautiously over at the scene of their solicitude. But Trovaldo seemed to hold such security in scorn, and continued to walk to and fro unconcernedly, but evidently not careless.

"What a deep frown hangs on the general's brow to-day," observed one of the aides-de-camp to another.

"Yes," replied the other; "his horoscope, methinks, told heavy tidings for this tenth of May, 1600. He has not held up his head since morning dawned. Doomsday is come for him, 't would seem."

"Hush! he advances this way! he is about to speak."

"Well, well, Barochio," said Trovaldo, coming forward,

and in a tone of sarcastic calm much unlike his usual harsh energy—"when will this warfare of water-spouts be at an end? You have worked incessantly for ten days and nights. The river is fretted, and the very fishes must be tired of these delays."

"Patience, Don Juan, patience," exclaimed the Italian, with a keen glance at the operations beyond the river. "In a moment more—nay, *now*, this very instant, the whole machine begins to work! Mark how the suction-hose swells out; and see how each connecting pipe throbs and leaps, like a huge serpent, up the rocks, and into the secret aperture. To Saint Geronimo all praise! If, Baron Roulemonde, you are sure of the local intricacies within, I pledge my skill, my fame, my head, that the enemy is ruined. The whole body of the river is at my command. I can suck it dry to its deepest bed!"

"In, in with the flood, then, Barochio! Submerge them all! The whole stores of the castle, corn, wine, ammunition, all are in those hitherto inaccessible vaults—that almost invisible entrance commands every passage. Can nothing oppose the force of the stream?"

"Not all the dykes of Holland combined. To Saint Geronimo all praise!" cried the bigot or hypocrite engineer, dropping on his knees, and crossing himself, with real or mock devotion.

"Pour it in, pour it in, in torrents!" uttered Lyderic, not noticing Barochio's movements, but with eyes fixed on the castle, while Trovaldo and his attendant officers, in habitual superstition, uncovered their heads, and joined in a general genuflexion. But Trovaldo soon rose up again and said,—

"Heaven and the saints be thanked for whatever works ill to the enemies of our holy faith, or our royal masters! Be they heretics or rebels, let them perish! Amen!"

"Amen!" muttered the pious and loyal group around.

"But still this pleases me not," continued Trovaldo, in his gloomy tone; "I love not to see brave soldiers drowned like rats in a hole, or starved into submission. Rather in the breach or in the battle-field let me and my gallant comrades meet them, foot to foot! Baron de Roulemonde, I could not refuse to permit this inglorious plan of yours, or to aid the devilish cunning of Barochio here for the destruction of the

arch-rebel ; but my soul is sad at the result — sword-blades and valour have had no share in this conquest.”

“ Patience again, Don Juan ! let me echo Barochio’s words. Wait, wait awhile, and you will have, or much I marvel, clashing of swords and crossing of pikes enough for your heart’s content. Think not De Bassenvelt will die in the flood we shall pour in upon him. Famine, by and by, if it force him not to yield, will at least dislodge him from his deluged den. But many a bloody stroke must be exchanged ere he abandon the strong hold of his race ; so cheer up, my gallant general, we shall have no lack of fighting. Does all work well, Barochio ? ”

“ Work well ! ” repeated the grinning engineer, “ look at those leathern allies of ours, that stretch up the rocks under yon mechanician’s guiding hand—see how they drink the stream, and vomit the draught into the castle’s heart. Let that but last till to-morrow’s dawn, and the whole garrison will be afloat ! ”

“ My valiant Barochio ! ” exclaimed Lyderic, with a pleased yet malignant smile, “ how would the grisly counts of Welbasch stare from their graves, to see their *impregnable* fortress ruined by the aid of the vassal stream that served them for mere adornment ! ”

“ Beware, beware, noble baron ! ” said the superstitious Italian, in a timorous tone ; “ speak not so lightly of the buried dead—we war not against them. Heaven and Saint Geronimo forbid that the bones of mouldering mortality should be disturbed by operations like ours ! ”

“ By heaven, but I believe they are though ! ” cried Trovaldo, in gloomy energy.

“ Don Juan ! ” exclaimed Lyderic, in a reproachful and taunting accent.

“ Nay, nay, good baron, you may sneer as usual, but I speak with cause. ’Tis notorious that witchcraft and magic have long held their court in yon gloomy tower ; and, hark ye, one private word with you, while Barochio watches the progress of his pipes. Walk apart with me.”

“ You stand in an exposed spot, Don Juan. Descend here to this shelter,” said Lyderic, whose courage was not of the instinctive violence of his general’s.

“ Tut, tut, baron ! When you have seen as much service

as I have, you will despise expedients that never turned the destined course of a bullet. Come up from your shelter—I would speak with you.”

This was uttered in that tone of fearless authority, which, in scenes of danger, gives inferior mortals so much influence over those by whom they are at other times held cheap, if not despised. Lyderic left Barochio leaning on the parapet, and watching the progress of his work; and stepping upwards he joined Trovaldo, who took him by the arm, and deeply whispered as they proceeded along,—

“Ay, baron, I *do* believe the dead are roused from the tomb—one at least, whose grave was a deep chasm in the Alpuxara mountains, has risen and shown himself before me; for last night I saw a Moriscoe dog, whom my rapier pierced through the heart years and years ago.”

“How is this, Don Juan?” said Lyderic; “do you give way to fancies that Barochio might be ashamed to own?”

“By the life of my saint, ’tis true!” exclaimed Trovaldo, in a still more solemn tone. “I saw the turbaned, pale-faced miscreant look into the very curtains of my tent. It was no illusion, for every fold of his dress spoke to his identity. He was the father of Gaspar, my renegade slave, and of her whose image seems gnawing here at my heart.”

“And what did you do?” asked Lyderic.

“Lie trembling like a craven culprit till the spectre vanished. And since that brief visiting I am no more myself. A heavy load is on me. I feel as though my final hour drew nigh. ’Tis needless to combat with this rooted feeling; I know that fate hangs over me, ready to strike.”

“I will not, Don Juan, combat this illusion that a day must dissipate. Even now success awaits you, triumph and honour will crown this expedition, and——”

“The triumph and honour will all be yours,” interrupted Trovaldo. “What have I done in this exploit? I know no secret ways—I plant no water-pipes, to steal upon or drown my enemy. But be it as it may, my whole frame is oppressed with a presentiment of evil. I never felt it before, nor shall I have to suffer it long. My day is nearly done; but never mind, let fate run its course. Still I grasp at the chance of regaining her for whom alone I care to live. Let our works go on. Keep this to yourself, nor let my weakness be exposed.

To horse now, baron, and while I pen my despatches to the archdukes, look you to the northern battery. Its fire seems to slacken; but we must complete yonder breach. Let me but live to mount it, to meet this dog De Bassenvelt, to snatch Beatrice from his arms and then die,—I seek no more."

With these words Trovaldo turned to the place where he had left Barochio, who, in anxiety to get a better view of the operations so skilfully going on, had shifted from his former position into that which Lyderic had occupied beside him, and he thence peeped cautiously over. At the moment when Lyderic with Trovaldo returned to the spot, a cannon ball from the ramparts whizzed across the river, tearing up a furrow of foam along its surface; then striking the bank, it leaped with a fatal rebound, and struck the unfortunate engineer's head clean from his shoulders.

The usual exclamations of horror and surprise burst from the group around. Trovaldo, turning to Lyderic, who stood silently biting his lips, coolly said,—

"Well, baron! was this exposure more dangerous than that shelter? Who, after this, would seek to shun his fate? Let it be a lesson to all. Carry off the body, and tell Spinelli he may dance for joy: he is now head of the water-spout department—that bullet signed his promotion!"

Trovaldo now mounted his horse, and rode off to another part of the lines. Some of his attendant staff galloped away with various orders. Lyderic hastened to the newly-appointed chief engineer, to require his immediate superintendence of the important works so successfully established by his predecessor. The buzz and bustle of the scene went on with ceaseless vigour; and, with the exception of the general-in-chief, the whole of the besieging force rejoiced in the measures in full effect for inundating the fortress, soon forgetting the headless contriver of the operations which caused such universal joy.

Within the castle of Welbasch nothing could exceed the consternation excited by the effects of Barochio's skill, and De Roulemonde's treachery, except the presence of mind and intrepidity displayed by De Bassenvelt, in divining and carrying into immediate action the only effectual remedy. At the first report made by the astonished storekeepers of the ex-

traordinary appearance of water oozing into vaults cut in the solid rock, a thousand conjectures were started, as to the pumps and wells having by some phenomenon changed their operations, or the immense leaden tanks and reservoirs on the castle roofs having "burst their seams," and discharged their contents. The rapidly increasing rush of the invading element left no time for the solution of these theories ; to stop its progress was the great object. But in order to accomplish this, the line of its ingress was to be traced, and the efforts at doing so increased the evil, for every little trap-door or portal opened in the subterranean galleries to aid the enquiry facilitated the entry of the flood that now came booming in. The passage chosen by Lyderic, and communicating with every ramification of the rest, was of the smallest width ; but the resistless force of the propelling power carried every obstruction before it. Partitions and doors, of stone or wood, gave way alike. The artificial tide filled every nook and crevice, and burst through all impediments. Before any real knowledge of its source could be acquired, irreparable mischief was done. Several of the persons employed in the care of the provisions and provender, stowed into these hitherto impregnable compartments, were drowned ere they imagined the possibility of danger. Others fled in dismay at the sight and sound of the stream, which hissed and boiled along the cavities, forcing the long-confined and noxious air before it, with thick columns of dust and rubbish, the accumulation of centuries.

As soon as the alarm was understood above, scores of persons rushed down, with every possible contrivance to aid in stopping the torrent that roared mercilessly in. Beds, blankets, woolpacks were thrust forward, in vain opposition, by each new comer. The already swollen corpses of the early victims met them at the foot of every flight of stairs ; and provisions of all kinds, corn, meal, dried meats, and wine, were tossed in promiscuous destruction on the agitated waters. The ammunition magazine, far sunk in the rock, and in the spot fixed on as the most remote from any possible contingency of danger, was also soon approached by the waves. This produced redoubled exertions and tenfold consequent confusion, on the part of the household, the garrison, and the numerous refugees who had taken shelter in the castle. All caught the alarm, and felt that their very existence was at stake, while the thousand

means suggested for relief all clashed with and counteracted each other.

In the midst of confusion, vociferation, and clamour, De Bassenvelt appeared.

He lost not a moment in idle astonishment or still more idle grief. A throb of agitation certainly shook his heart, and his brain seemed to burn with condensed energy of thought. A sense of his own and his people's danger, a certainty that his means of defence were reduced by many precious weeks, admiration of the skill so actively working his ruin, horror at the too tardy conviction of Lyderic's treachery — these were among the mass of combinations that his mind at once took in. He made his way through the throng. Every tongue was in an instant hushed; every eye fixed on him. He reached one of the flights of stairs hewn in the rocky foundation and leading to the vaults. By the light of the torches flaring far into these depths, he saw the flood wallowing in its own involutions, and marked the congregated proofs of destruction. He uttered not a word, but hastily turning round, and rapidly gaining the court-yard, he gave his loud command that the whole force of the castle should at once turn out from the three portal gates, for a simultaneous attack on the village. A shout from every throat answered his command; and each officer and every man of the ready garrison seized their arms, and hurried to their various stations for assembling, all worked up to desperation by the frightful exigency of the case.

"A volunteer, to descend and examine the western front of the rocks!" were Count Ivon's next words, during the bustling formation of the various dismounted platoons. The Moriscoe instantly stepped forward, and a score others followed his movement.

"Thanks, Aben Farez!" said Count Ivon, with a smile that would have repaid any one of his followers for any possible risk or sacrifice. "Up with the rampart postern; run the platform out; steady the pulley bar; quick, quick! Grasp the rope firmly, Aben Farez; discover what you can; and tell me all!"

The small square postern on the rampart overlooking the river was immediately opened, a narrow platform shot out a few feet beyond the ridge, and a strong bar with a cord and pulley, formerly used for communications with the village, was

quickly fixed above. Grasping firm hold of the rope with hands and legs, the Moriscoe swung out from off the platform, on which De Bassenvelt with Beatrice, and one or two others, stood, leaning over to the utmost verge, and listening for whatever words the adventurous volunteer might utter from his aerial point of observation. He was soon out of sight, for the rope slipping rapidly over the projecting mass of granite, swung in again towards the face of the rock, giving him full power of observation on whatever went on below, and at the same time exposing him to the assaults of whatever missiles the enemy might direct against him.

"Holy Alla preserve him!" murmured Beatrice, shuddering as she gazed on the strong vibration of the rope.

"Hist, hist! he speaks!" whispered De Bassenvelt, eagerly leaning forward, and striving to catch the sound of the Moriscoe's voice through some moments' pause in the cannon's din. And a few broken sentences came indistinctly on the listener's ear:—

"From the river to the rocks, all seems alive with huge and curious engines. Enormous snake-like tubes are writhing in sinuous motion up from the water's edge. The soldiers all gaze on the works—the guards have left their arms—they see me and seem alarmed—now one levels his arquebuss to fire at me—another—haul up, haul up! Quick! I have no more to tell."

"Up with him—quick, quick!" cried De Bassenvelt and Beatrice together; and both in their impatience seized the rope which several strong arms dragged rapidly across the pulley. But they were not fast enough to outspeed the enemy's bullets. Two or three in quick succession whistled up into the air close to the platform's edge; and as the rope was wound rapidly up, harshly grating over the ridge of granite, full half its thickness was worn away. The Moriscoe's peril made every heart thrill. He literally hung by a thread, which the slightest motion threatened to break. Yet his weight was evidently felt by all who pulled at the trembling and fragile cord. Another shot from below was heard in the bullet's upward whiz; and with it a quick jirk and an instant slackening of the rope told to the over-anxious group that the Moriscoe had quitted his hold and fallen below.

"Holy Alla! Holy Alla!" cried Beatrice, sinking into De Bassenvelt's arms.

"Haul up, haul up!" screamed Aben Farez from below the ledge of rock, against which he had only for a moment rested one of his feet, and by an instant slackening of his hold, recovered it with firmer nerve. A renewed pull from every sinewy arm, and a loud cheer of encouragement, answered the cry; and in an instant more the turbaned head appeared. Another and another shot came up—the Moriscoe dropped one arm—he was hit! Still one strong pull—his body reached the rough edge of the rock—another—he was clear above it, and safe from the enemy's bullets—another still—and snap went the rope across! All those who pulled it fell back with the shock; and the falling Moriscoe, as he struck against the precipice's edge, seized and clung to it in the rivetted grasp of despair. A scream burst from Beatrice, who in the horrid impulse was on the point of dashing herself forward, but was withheld by one of the soldiers. In this moment De Bassenvelt, seizing the end of the broken rope, and twisting it strongly round his left wrist, threw himself across the platform's edge, and while the men above, in speechless fear, held the remaining cordage strong and firm, he slid down the broken face of the rock, till he came close to the shuddering and almost exhausted Moriscoe.

"Courage, courage!" cried he, as he stretched forth his hand, which the other dared not attempt to grasp, for had he loosened his hold and missed De Bassenvelt, he must have been infallibly precipitated down. His deliverer saw this, and by one steady clutch he caught the thick folds of his vest and tunic, and while those above, who watched every movement, instantly hauled up again, De Bassenvelt touched from time to time the projecting points of rock, and was quickly on the platform, the worn out Moriscoe firmly held in his saving grasp. A hysteric shriek of joy from Beatrice was their double welcome; and they were both in an instant alternately clasped within her arms.

"To the village! to the village, my comrades!" cried De Bassenvelt, gently disengaging himself, and turning to the armed group which filled the courts. "Death or Victory! *must* now be our cry. Our only chance of safety is in the utter destruction of the enemy there. Desperation must

nerve each arm. Out at every portal ! and one furious invincible rush will do the rest. Don Diego in the van — all others in their places ! On, on, to the charge !”

“ A Bassenvelt ! A Bassenvelt !” was the loud-sent answer from five hundred throats — and in a moment the tramp of a thousand heavy feet echoed on the rough pavement that led to the village below.

“ And now, artisans, for rapid work !” cried De Bassenvelt to some forgermen and other mechanics who stood near. “ Clear away this end of rope, and sling a chain across the pulley — stand by me now a couple of ye — seize a hatchet each, and give me one — we must descend by the chain cable below, even where this brave Moriscoe has already been, and cut through the leathern pipes which are carrying this tide of ruin into our strong hold. Quick, quick, my lads, let your hammers clink !”

And almost as speedily as the words were spoken the order was obeyed. The long, connecting chain, which lay on the rampart and bound several of the brass culverins to their carriages, was instantly unlinked and as quickly rivetted again, in the new position indicated by Count Ivon. A sharp-edged hatchet was placed in his hand, and several of the workmen pressed forward, anxious of the honour of being the companions of his perilous adventure. He chose the two next to him, and the Moriscoe insisted on being also joined in it. Count Ivon briefly remonstrated, on the score of his wounded arm ; but Aben Farez, baring the limb that Beatrice had just begun to bind with her torn scarf, convinced all those around that the hurt was slight, and that it was only a momentary stunning of the nerves that had forced him to quit his hold of the rope. There was a peremptory anxiety in his request that Count Ivon could not resist ; and Beatrice gave up her opposing entreaties, as her excited sympathy in the danger of the hour overcame the natural burst of feminine tenderness.

“ And I, De Bassenvelt, what can I do in this moment of general action ? Must I stand here in ignoble safety, while all I hold dear is in danger like this ?”

“ Yes, Beatrice, here is thy post — to watch over and direct the important duty of this windlass and pulley, on which thy brother and myself now hang our every hope — once safely landed below, I swear to return triumphant, or no more — to

purge the village of our foes, and destroy their works, or perish without waiting the ruin they intend me ! Stand steady and calm, my sweet friend — and when once we are below, remember that you look to her, who in the coming alarm may need thy care more than I wish to dwell on. If I fall thou knowest what to say and do !”

Beatrice stifled the emotion that uprose at these words ; and De Bassenvelt took his position on a small narrow board which was passed through a link of the chain to support his feet ; his left hand grasped the chain, his right hand wielded the hatchet, his only weapon. The windlass was let loose, and he went gradually down, and just above his head a second little footboard was inserted, on which the Moriscoe placed himself in the same manner, his long bladed Spanish knife firmly held before him. A third and fourth board were successively placed at like distances, as the chain was gradually lowered, and the two volunteer workmen took their steady footing and hold. De Bassenvelt now rested on the outmost ledge of rock, over which he cast an anxious glance. In a minute or two loud shouts and the quick fire of musketry were heard from below, and then De Bassenvelt called out to Beatrice and those on the platform, —

“ Now, now, let us steadily down ; the smoke from the firing forms a shroud to hide us from view. Loose away ! loose away !”

The chain gradually rattled through the pulley, and the four gallant men were soon suspended over the scene of slaughter which the village now presented. The royalist force, taken quite unawares in the midst of their exultation at the prodigious efforts of the engineers and their machinery, hurried to their arms and defences in breathless confusion, but with unshaken courage. Don Diego Leonis and the other officers, heading the garrison troops with desperate fury poured in from every arquebuss a thick discharge, and then rushed forward, pike and sword in hand. The royalists returned a scattered fire, and amidst the cloud of smoke rising and enveloping the face of the rock, De Bassenvelt found himself close to a small projection beside the opening, where three or four of the huge pipes were inserted. He caught by one foot on this landing-place, and a blow of his hatchet felled to the earth, full fifty feet below, the mechanic who

stood on the topmost bar of a ladder, and directed the application of the pipes. He next sprang against the rock, seized the readiest angle, and then moved closer to the aperture, making room for the Moriscoe. The first of the two workmen safely followed their movement, and clung to the rock; but the last unfortunate fellow, slipping from his imperfect footing, was dashed headlong down, and met an instant death on the rugged basement below. De Bassenvelt and his remaining companions, by simultaneous and redoubled strokes, soon cut through the tough materials that formed the tubes, and cast them successively down, flaccid and innocuous. They next hacked at, and pulled away by main force, the plugs and wadding which had kept the pipes firm in the aperture; and as they finally removed them a rush of water poured back from the surcharged cavities, and spouted down the rocks in a violent cascade.

De Bassenvelt could not now resist the impulse that urged him to descend and join in the fierce *mêlée* which sent up its discordant tumult. Brandishing his hatchet, and forgetting in the heat of the moment every thing but the wild excitement of his courage, he stepped on the ladder, and with some words which his followers could not hear amidst the uprising din, he rapidly began his descent. The Moriscoe and his companion wanted no word of command; they followed close, but ere they were half way down, the ladder was forcibly pushed in the confusion below, and flung from its resting-place against the rock, while the three adventurers were cast violently to the ground. A moment's stunning sensation passed across De Bassenvelt, but he felt that his limbs were whole, and he bounded on his feet. Aben Farez was in an instant by his side. The workman lay insensible, not having had the good luck to fall, as they did, among the twisted leathern tubes which lay in providential coils, and completely broke the fall.

With blows of the hatchet, and stabs of the knife dealt fiercely round, De Bassenvelt and the Moriscoe soon cleared their way through the astonished and half-beaten royalists; and reached the strong defence thrown up before the village towards the castle approaches. Shouting loudly "A Bassenvelt, liberty!" the war cries of the garrison — they fiercely attacked the crowded guard; and by an instance common in

such kind of warfare, two men put hundreds to flight. Surprise and panic adding many imagined echoes to every shout thus sounding in their rear, through clouds of smoke, the royalists abandoned their whole line of defence, and rushed towards the river. Don Diego and his troops then bounded unopposed over every impediment, and gazed as on a miracle at their beloved chief, hailing them with cries of victory within the enemy's lines.

The remainder of the scene was more a butchery than a battle. A merciless pursuit went on, till every royalist was dead or disabled in the village street, or plunged into the stream. Reinforcements from the opposite banks were sent out in every disposable boat and raft, by the immediate command of Lyderic, who rode along the river's edge, frantic with rage and disappointment at the utter destruction which he saw to be going on in all Barochio's complicated works. But every effort was vain to effect any impression on the successful garrison. They maintained their well won advantage, repulsing every attempt at landing, aided by the castle guns which played down on the assailants as they crossed the river, making dreadful havoc among each armed detachment. Dead bodies of those shot or drowned floated on the stream and choked the passage of the retreating boats. Darkness fell at length on the scene. Yet long continued discharges from the besieging batteries were idly spent against the heavy mound, rapidly thrown up by the victors, or against the rocks above; while every flash was a sure guide for the direction of the castle artillery, which kept up an incessant cannonade far into the depths of the night.

CHAPTER II.

At length the flashes and the thunder from rampart and battery became less and less frequent: the wild tenants of the forest were no longer startled in their lair; and the war-fiend seemed to yield to the general law of nature, which forces all things into the salubrity of sleep. But many an exception

was to be found in the besiegers' camp — wounded wretches writhing with bodily pain, and mental sufferers tortured by the disgrace of defeat.

None among the latter felt the events of the evening so acutely as Lyderic de Roulemonde. The re-action of his excited hopes was almost insupportable. He could scarcely believe that all the promised results of his own and Barochio's plans had been so utterly frustrated, even in the very hour of their triumphant developement. Uncalculating as to the extent of mischief effected within the castle, his egotism could only dwell on its own partial disappointment; for a selfish man, even in his revenge, is more alive to the agitation he endures than the pain he inflicts. Lyderic saw no longer in his grasp the glory of De Bassenvelt's conquest, the rewards it would secure him, the certainty of Theresa's and Beatrice's capture, and his double delight in their possession and humiliation. A few short hours before he had revelled in the anticipation of all this. Now its realisation seemed impossible — so soon does a mean mind leap from doubt to despair.

If Trovaldo may be said to have felt at all on this occasion, his sensations were those of pleasure, at the failure of what appeared to him the inglorious means of conquest of which his second in command was alone to reap the honour. He had therefore taken no part in the proceedings of the evening, but staid aloof in his tent, leaving the attempts to regain the village wholly to Lyderic's direction. Had Trovaldo, in his boiling courage, headed the royalist attacks, their result might have been different, for many a wonderful effect has been produced by a general's personal exposure, from the day on which Alexander crossed the Granicus, to that when Wellington bore down at Waterloo *him* who had led on his fellow-warriors across Arcola's bridge. Lyderic de Roulemonde was not of this stamp. He never shunned the danger that duty required him to risk. But he never sought it, in those moments of inspired imprudence which distinguish the hero from the mere machine, and raise war from the degradation of a trade to the grandeur of a passion.

Trovaldo paced the narrow limits of his tent, and found even that extent too wide for him. Neither his mind nor body was fit to be at large. A heavy weight was still on his spirits, and he could scarcely even relish the depression of his

discomfited lieutenant, who occupied a seat at the table. When Barochio's ten days' labours had appeared crowned with complete success, Trovaldo had, as in duty bound, immediately sent off a despatch to the archdukes. But its official coldness was strongly contrasted with the brief yet glowing bulletin which Lyderic forwarded by the same conveyance to his ministerial friend Don Zeronimo Zapata, who had by some caprice of patronage, or for some private end, taken him firmly by the hand. It was a grievous task for Lyderic to pen a contradiction to the pæan he had so lately shouted. Yet such was imposed on him by Trovaldo; and he found it better to submit and soften the truth as he best might, than trust to Trovaldo's account of his unsuccessful operations. He felt conscious that he had not in the evening's emergency done all that he might, and that the general in his place would have done. The consequent feeling in his mind was a rankling envy of that courage, the only quality in which Trovaldo was his superior. Had Lyderic but struck the balance fairly, how satisfied he might have been. But the envious never stop to compare or calculate advantages, although they can quickly multiply into a sum of discontent against others the myriads of their own insect deficiencies. Lyderic, therefore, worked himself up to hate this new object of dislike, solely from a consciousness of his own inferiority in one point; and he would fain have joined in the superstitious misgivings with which Don Juan was filled for himself.

"But no," thought Lyderic, as he sat at the table composing the despatch, and followed with a sly side glance Trovaldo's restless movements in the tent, — "no, that will not be. I cannot force my reason into an alliance with my wishes. Yet, who knows what I may not be able to effect, to give reality to the fears of this gross grenadier? He stands in my way. How may I obviate the impediment? I cannot step over his head — but I might stride across his body! Fate may keep her promise of ill luck to him. Let him beware!"

Amidst these and other cogitations of a like dark nature, Lyderic finished the supplementary report, announcing the total failure and destruction of those ingenious and costly works, the success of which his letter of a few hours before had so boastfully proclaimed. He sealed up the despatch,

and slipped into its enclosure a short private note to Zaputá, insinuating that his efforts to save the village and machinery were thwarted and defeated, less by the efforts of the rebels than the want of co-operation in the general-in-chief; but still promising final, if not prompt success, provided his plans were left to his own execution. An attendant aide-de-camp was now summoned, and directed to send off an immediate express; and the tramp of a horse's feet, and clatter of its rider's accoutrements, announced the prompt departure of a mounted dragoon.

"Well," said Trovaldo, as if for a moment relieved from the oppression that had weighed on him, — "well! there goes the winding up of all this expensive and fruitless affair. That poor devil Barochio had all his pains, even the loss of his head, for nothing. We have sacrificed ten days, four hundred men, and ten times as many thousand florins — and gained what? Defeat and disgrace! But what better could have been looked for from such operations? Who ever heard of a fortress falling like a galleon, from the depth of water in its hold? Let then this unworthy experiment suffice — let our cannons batter their walls — let the breach be made, and the assault given — let me carry this castle at the head of my brave fellows, or die in the attempt — if, indeed, I am not doomed to fall in a less glorious way!"

And here the dark cloud of despondency seemed again to hang over the general.

"Don Juan," replied Lyderic, with a spiteful suppression of his resentment, "you will no doubt act as best beseems you as long as you command here; but ——"

"As long as!" exclaimed Trovaldo, a latent spark of his natural impetuosity bursting through the gloom. "What does that expression mean? Who may set a term to my command? What meddling minister would step between me and my sovereign? Is an old soldier, covered with wounds, to be made the sport of fawning courtiers and intriguing boys? Who dares to interfere with my orders?"

"I know not," said Lyderic, calmly, "if this fierce catechism be meant for me — but I have at least no intention to answer it. Insinuations against their highnesses' ministers may best be addressed to Brussels."

"Let them go there, what care I? You may report my

words, as you contravene my wishes. I am but a subaltern in my own army — the very pioneers hold higher influence. It is all your doing, Baron Roulemonde!"

"Nay, nay, Don Juan," said Lyderic, in a smooth tone, "you do me wrong, and yourself injustice; but I see you are in a wayward mood to-night, and these injuries must pass."

"Have you not threatened me with the loss of my command?"

"What can have given you such a notion, Don Juan? I said 'as long as you hold it.' Is life then eternal? May not Barochio's fate be yours, or mine, or any man's to-morrow?"

"Some men, Baron Roulemonde, take better care of the heads on their shoulders than others on whose death they speculate; there is certainly promotion for us all, and I may not stand long in your way."

"Don Juan, this is too bad; you do me wrong. I have not provoked these retorts — I said nothing ——"

"You *looked* it, sir, and that is worse. Deeds or words I can bear, ay, and pay back," said Trovaldo, striking the hilt of his rapier; "but, by the blood of the martyrs, I cannot and *will* not be worn away by sneers and sarcasms! So speak out, Baron Roulemonde, if you have aught to say — if not, good night!"

"You give small relish to our conference, Don Juan," said Lyderic, rising and taking up his hat, and biting his lips, in a way that might have told a keen observer the agitation he writhed under; "you declaim against sarcasm, but do not disdain its use."

"I disdain all underhand work, Baron Roulemonde; I am straight-forward in all I say or do," cried Trovaldo, again striking his sword with rising violence, at observing Lyderic's composure, not being able to discriminate between the unruffled calm of dignity, and the nervous dissimulation of cunning.

"This must not go farther, Don Juan," said Lyderic; "my duty commands me to have no personal feelings now. I take my leave, and await your orders for the morrow. But bear in mind, I now propose to you, that instead of wasting time and ammunition in persevering to batter a mass of im-

movable rock, our whole force be employed to regain the village. That once again in our possession, the castle is at our mercy; for though our late proceedings have failed — no matter how or wherefore — we have still the means of introducing into yonder cavities and vaults materials that may soon communicate with the magazines, and, by a well-placed train and a single match, blow the garrison to atoms. I have done *my* duty — you best know *yours*. Good night!”

“And is that the way you perform our compact, Baron Roulemonde?” said Trovaldo, hoarse with suppressed rage, and stalking up to Lyderic as he was about to quit the tent. “Have you forgotten private promises, as well as personal feelings? Has Beatrice ceased to exist? and, in your plan of wholesale destruction, do you forget that her safety and my possession of her were the conditions that raised you to the station you hold?”

“I hold it by my sovereigns’ favour, and hope to keep it by my own merit. As to individual objects, they must take their chance,” answered Lyderic, coldly, and still inclining towards the door of the tent.

“Hold!” cried Trovaldo, fiercely grasping him by the arm, “stir not an inch, or, by the army of saints, I strike you dead at my foot! What! do you dare to treat me thus? Me, who have placed you where you are; who have sought for *you* rank and honour that I would scorn to seek for myself? Me ——”

“Softly, softly, Don Juan! Had you been able to shift without me, or carry your views alone, the prison of Bruges had been my lot. You may deceive *yourself*, not *me* — and our first interview together might have told you I am not to be bullied. Then be advised — abate this ill-judged fury — let not those without suppose dissension between us. Let us run our course clearly — together, all objects may be gained — separate, we have no chance.”

“Do you then hold to our compact?” said Trovaldo, brought to a rapid check by the plain and unanswerable truths of Lyderic’s speech.

“To be sure I do,” replied the latter.

“And Beatrice must be mine?”

“Ay, if we can save her.”

"If! Can you then calculate in cold blood the chance of her destruction?"

"Life is but a game of chance, Don Juan," replied Lyderic, with a sneer.

"Let fate, then, stand neuter, and the game may still be mine!" muttered Trovaldo, after a pause. Then striking his breast he added, in an unconscious reverie, "This may be a mere weakness. Let me but master it. I am the sport of passion—its plaything." He then waved his hand to Lyderic, with the haughty air in which he had been wont to motion his slave. Lyderic retired; and calling to the group of soldiers who formed his personal escort, he walked rapidly and silently to his own tent, which lay at some hundreds of yards' distance from that of the general-in-chief.

Trovaldo, thus left alone, came instantly to that comfortable state of calm which, in men like him, follows the reflux of a flood of anger. Self-dissatisfaction, and something like self-contempt, is its natural consequence, in minds which are too narrow to see beyond their own operations. But the passionate man who, in his moments of reason, can examine the character of others, will probably be satisfied that in their frigid endurance there is little less weakness and certainly more suffering than in his violence. The whirlpools and eddies of rage suppressed are less elevated and more painful than its hurricane gusts. There is, too, a moral grandeur in the tempest of passion, which leaves a more splendid serenity behind it, and brings a thousand kindly influences to the surface of the breast, that lie for ever latent in that which throbs with insipid regularity. Let then the passionate man bear with his own infirmity, nor thwart the natural tendency to self-esteem, by envying those whose disquietudes rankle in the heart, but never, by a wholesome overflow, clear off "the perilous stuff," that honeycombs it to the core.

Had Trovaldo been capable of this comparison, he had not looked after Lyderic and in upon himself with such self-disparagement as he now did. As it was, nothing could be more mortifying than his feelings, left alone with the sentiment of his own littleness, and quite at the mercy of the superstitious gloom that had so heavily oppressed him. The night was thoroughly dark, except where the watch-fires threw fitful gleams on the swart faces of the cloak-wrapped sentinels, or

brought the flame-coloured branches of the trees into glaring relief. A heavy rain pattered on the tents as the canvass gradually tightened with the moisture; and the cords now and then, from over-tension, snapped their pegs from the earth. A busy hum was kept up along the river's edge, by the constant challenging of the sentries, the murmuring of the patrols, the neighing and trampling of the horses picketed through the lines, or the dismal moanings from the hospital huts erected in the rear. But all this was the monotony of silence, compared to the day-noises of the late tremendous scenes, and Trovaldo had never before suffered such a sense of desolateness. He had, previous to his conference with Lyderic, dismissed his attendants; and also, as was usual with him at night, the sentry from the duty of pacing before his tent; for he piqued himself on his relaxations of mere personal etiquette, and gave many such indulgences to the troops, by which, joined to his intrepid conduct, he had largely gained their favour. He now felt a passing inclination to recall the sentry to his post, and longed for the sound of his footsteps as a sort of companionship. He had resolved to summon one of his attendants from their quarters close by. But shame withheld him from demanding any unusual duty in so dreary a night; and he withdrew into the tent, closing behind him the triangular flap that formed its door. He then passed with two or three strides along the outer compartment, and drew back the curtain that divided it from the inner space which contained his simple bed, a couch of leather tightly stretched between two wooden bars, with a hard stuffed cushion for his head, and a thickly quilted camlet coverlid. Three or four rude stools, a desk, and a couple of tables, completed the furniture of this tent, which formed a striking contrast to the splendid decorations of many a modern marquee.

Trovaldo unbuckled his belt, and laid his rapier aside, with his short cloak and surcoat, loosened the ruff from his neck, and wrapped his loose roquelaure around him. He threw a disdainful glance on the plans and sketches of the late machinery and its proposed operations, which had been traced by the unfortunate Barochio, and still lay scattered on the table at which he had that day sat in close conference with the two commanders. There was nothing there to give an amiable turn to Trovaldo's murky thoughts. Books he despised, and

of course did not possess. But, like most of the military serving in the Low Countries, he had acquired the habitual use of tobacco ; and he now drew forth his clay pipe and canister from a drawer of his desk, filled the tube, lighted the weed, and lay down on his leathern stretcher. He did not close his eyes, having no inclination to turn his thoughts inward ; but he for some time amused himself (as many a man of more mind has often done in a like situation) by puffing the tobacco smoke at the insects which the moisture of the earth sent crawling up on the canvass and the bed-curtains, and which fell thickly down, suffocated by the overpowering fumes.

When no more of these enemies were left alive, and the tent was comfortably filled with the fragrant vapour, Trovaldo laid his empty pipe on the stool beside him ; and taking from his breast the miniature of Beatrice, which always hung suspended by a steel chain round his neck, he gazed at it for a few minutes with grim sternness, stroking his beard the while. Then, with a hoarse and hollow exclamation of mixed admiration and anger, he replaced it under his doublet ; and turning the lamp on the round marble table that stood within his reach, he left himself in shade, folded his arms, allowed his heavy eyelids to close, and strove to encourage the approach of sleep. A perturbed doze stole over him, and he lay in a middle state of sensation, the pattering of the rain being the medium that kept him balanced between the indistinctness of waking and slumber. He several times started up, and looked anxiously towards the tent door, but he only saw the shadow of chair or table along the rush-strewn floor, and the canvass flaps, agitated gently by the night breeze. He leant on his elbow and listened. The rain above him was the only sound, besides the occasional noises before mentioned, and again and again he sank into his broken rest.

Once more he awoke — but he did not now, as on the former occasion, start up and cast a quick glance around him. A curdling thrill crept through him, and though instantaneously awake, he felt paralysed, he could not open mouth or eye, nor lift his head from its hard pillow ; but his head throbbed fiercely, for he clearly felt a low breathing close to his face, and heard a slight rustling sound of drapery beside him. By a desperate exertion of the will, he faintly raised his lids, while the eyeballs under them felt as though glazed in their

sockets. By that imperfect glance Trovaldo saw enough to make him shake with horror. A figure bent over him, which his worst fears confirmed to be the same that had haunted him by its passing appearance the previous night, the dress, the size, the contour of the face, dimly shone on by the lamp's inverted ray, all combined to identify the injured and murdered chieftain, Hemeya, the father of Beatrice, as Trovaldo had last seen him falling beneath his sword, for his tunic and vest were covered with blood.

A cold and clammy shower of perspiration burst from Trovaldo's forehead, his joints rattled as he lay, and tons of pressure could not have more firmly held him down than did his excessive fear. His leaden gaze was riveted on the figure, for he could not now even shut out the horrid view, as it raised a glittering blade and stood in the attitude of striking. Trovaldo heaved his panting chest, as if to meet the death-blow threatened by the phantom; and the paroxysm of his terror was complete when his name seemed to pass from its lips, in a hollow, half-articulate sound.

"Trovaldo, Trovaldo!" said the figure, and a tremulous movement of the uplifted arm accompanied the call — "Trovaldo! I cannot kill thee sleeping — but awake, rise up, and die!"

At this summons, the gaunt form of Don Juan, as if inspired by some magical effect, did spring electrically up; when a blow of the dagger instantly struck his breast, and made him sink recumbent on the couch. The enamelled portrait which lay on his neck received the blade, and turned its point as it was shivered with the stroke. Trovaldo, at once recovering the amplest energy of his courage, with the conviction that it was a mortal voice that roused and a human arm that struck him, bounded unhurt upon his feet, and grappling his assailant with both hands, he dashed him to the earth; and then dropping on one knee beside him, he held him by the throat, looked fiercely upon his writhing countenance, and burst into his own peculiar yell of coarse invective and triumphant laughter.

"What! *thou*! dog — renegade — slave — Gaspar! Thou, in this mummer's garb! Thou think to do death to thy master! Ha, ha, ha, ha!" and then rising and letting go his

hold, he spurned with his foot the body that lay crouching beneath him.

It was, indeed, the Moriscoe, who, worked to fury by his sister's recital of Trovaldo's conduct to her, had thus for two successive nights contrived to cross the river and steal into the Spanish camp; availing himself of the facilities allowed by the general's well known habits to reach the entrance of his tent on one occasion, and into its very recesses on the other. He felt but half enfranchised while Trovaldo lived, and even as though the death-blow dealt by any hand but his would have rivetted his bonds in balking his revenge. Hovering round the tent, wrapped in a cloak, and hidden in the gloom, he had overheard the conference between Don Juan and Lyderic, and had patiently waited till the hoarse breathing of his intended victim proclaimed him sunk into that helpless state, during which he had so often watched by the couch he now meant to steep in blood. He entered cautiously, drew his dagger, and prepared to strike; but even while his arm was uplifted, the awakened sense of his long debasement seemed to paralyse both the nerve and the will. He thought it was generosity that made him pause—but it was downright fear, the slavish remnant of former degradation, which the counteraction of revenge was insufficient to overcome. For the dagger of an assassin to be unerring requires a higher impetus than private feeling. Brutus and all the homicides of history struck home, because the fanaticism of public motives urged the steel; such blows are almost always mortal, while mere domestic murderers falter and fail oftener than they succeed.

"Wretch!" continued Trovaldo, looking scornfully down, "and was this abortion of a would-be murder the ill I foolishly shrunk from? How I would have laughed at Fate, as I do now, had I known that *thou* wert to be its agent!"

Gaspar, as we must now again call him, shorn of the honours of his brief season of freedom, seemed overwhelmed by the enormity of the daring that led him on. As he lay under Trovaldo's glance he quailed and shrunk. Instinct for a moment prompted him to rise on his knees—but innate pride and lately imbibed notions of high feeling restrained the grovelling impulse, and he only sullenly turned half round, supporting

himself on one hand ; and looking in mixed awe and loathing on Trovaldo, he said, —

“ Tyrant, this blow has failed — the bad spirit that watches over you is not yet ready to take you, or you had not escaped. But wait awhile. Your hour will soon come round. Another hand remains to repeat the blow ! Now fill up the list of your wrongs to my race — plunge your rapier here, as you did in my father’s breast — avenge his shade, and my miserable mother’s and my still living sister who has baffled your villany ; — avenge them all on this recreant heart, which throbbed with a false sense of honour, and palsied the hand that should have dealt the death-blow while you slept ! Strike ! rid me of a now hateful life ! ”

“ Reptile ! thinkest thou I would stain my pure Toledo with thy helot blood ! Throw away thy dagger — rise — follow me to thy fate ! ” vociferated Trovaldo, in his tyrant tone.

“ You will not ! Thus then I do the deed ! ” cried the Moriscoe, raising himself on one knee and drawing back his right arm ; and the dagger’s point had actually entered the folds of his vest, with a force that would have sent it deep into his heart, when Trovaldo grasped the wrist, wrenched away the weapon, and dragged the intended suicide upon his legs again.

“ Insolent dog ! ” exclaimed Don Juan, with a look of scorn and mockery. “ Durst thou rob the rack of its prey, and me of my slave ? — A guard ho ! ” And as an officer and a few file of men hastily came into the tent, he handed over the struggling culprit, with orders that made even their rough natures shudder. “ Look, soldiers, on this Mahommedan dog ! this slave, that would have murdered me ! Take him hence — rivet a chain to his leg — and fasten it by a staple to the outer face of the north battery. Let him writhe and wriggle there in the heat of the cannonade. Let the rebel bullets tear him limb by limb, or some chain-shot cut him across — I give him that chance of a ready death, and spare him the torture of the rack ! Away with him ! ”

These orders were instantly obeyed ; and as the guards retired with their prisoner, Trovaldo strode backwards and forwards with a free and rapid air in front of his tent. He felt as though a mountain’s weight were shaken from his breast.

In recovering possession of Gaspar he seemed to have regained his own liberty, for a despot deprived of his slave feels himself reduced to negative thralldom ; an object for tyranny is a want of his mind, and there is no bondage like imagined wants.

“ Now let our work go on ! I am once more my own master—free—fearless—and invincible ! Away with doubt—I scorn danger—I spurn difficulty, even as I scorned and spurned yon dastard ! ” Thus did Trovaldo vapour in the midnight gloom, while his obedient guardsmen placed the manacled slave in the perilous position he had ordered ; and the sounds of the mallets, fastening down the stake to which he was chained, echoed hollowly against the earthen mound of the battery, and in the mouths of the guns which stood out from the embrasures above his head.

CHAPTER III.

OUR readers will now, perhaps not unwillingly, turn a reverting glance from those scenes of outward tumult, to the less boisterous agitations of the castle within, where our heroine has been, for a full fortnight, left to the endurance of her conflicting anxieties.

What she suffered on the first two days of her captivity was but little relieved during those which followed, for a perpetual state of suspense and mystery kept alive the inquietude so actively awakened. We last left her, flying from the picture gallery to the refuge of her own apartment. But when the loud 'larums of the day had subsided, Theresa felt a state of analogous repose insensibly stealing on her. Seated at her bedroom window once more she gazed out on the beautiful moonlight scene ; and a sympathetic tone of composure gradually blended with her fevered thoughts. Reverting rapidly to all that had passed in the eventful week, astonished at the multiplicity of feelings brought at once into life, and of events springing up around her, all the acuteness of suffering which had accompanied each shifting change was absorbed in

the mellow composure of her present state. She leant on the casement and looked out on the moon-lit indistinctness of the landscape, touched in all its lines and edges with the silvery tinge of fairy land. The very shadows were traversed with a filmy light which neutralised the gloom; and the whole aspect of external nature harmonised with, if it did not create, the complacency of Theresa's breast. Her eyes turned instinctively towards the high walls of the Wizard's Tower, a part of which projected into the court-yard, and was visible close to her casement; and she listened with tremulous anxiety for the promised sounds of that voice which was sure to penetrate the recesses of her heart. And at length it came faintly on, stealing, as it were, along each curve and angle of the massive walls that intervened between the tower and the body of the castle, and making musical the very stones which echoed its whispered melody. Again it came in a quicker and bolder swell, as if it flew at once from the singer's to the listener's heart, and the space between seemed to vibrate to its winged harmony. Then its cadences died away, and again returned, and sported and fluttered about, till the whole body of ambient air thrilled in eddies of sweet sound. Theresa listened, and wept, unconscious of her tears.

"Oh, how divinely satisfied I feel!" exclaimed she, when at length her thoughts became concentrated, and she regained the power of utterance. "How re-assured that all is right—how confident of happiness at last! Can these tones flow from a bosom capable of dishonour and deceit? Could this heart respond to a mean lover or a base impostor? No! his innate worth and my inherent pride are surety for us both. How weak, how criminal I have been, to sink under other influences, to let my mind be worked on by aught but his! How flimsy and false is all this glare of glory, this pride of rank! Could the whole line of this haughty race show one to equal *him* in tenderness and truth? Oh, he is true and tender! The faintest sound of his voice has the magic of sincerity—and that is the spell by which he has won and shall wear this heart in his. But into what perils is he about to plunge? What risk does he mean to run, to mark his right to what is by nature's gift, by reason's confirmation, his own! He claims a trial of my faith. 'T is just that he should; for has not this frail bosom throbbed with a shaken

allegiance? But I will prove its fidelity, let temptations assail me in what form they may. Let Beatrice trumpet forth the praises of her idol, let even that idol,—let De Bassenvelt's self appear, when he will, in what guise he may, in what season he chooses, — not even that shall move this true heart more, if indeed it be not to add a tenfold force to the devotion with which I consecrate it to Lambert Boonen!"

She turned round into her chamber, as she concluded this half uttered reverie — but shrunk back into the recess of the window, and pressed nervously, almost convulsively, against the wall, on discovering a figure enveloped in dark drapery standing close to where she had sat, but far enough from the casement to be out of the stream of moonlight, poured in under the overhanging arch that shaded the lattice work. All behind was gloom, for Theresa saw that the lamp was extinguished. Her first sensation was fear — but an instant changed it into another that she dared not analyse, lest she might find it to be pleasure. We hope our readers will not condemn these rapid shiftings of the mind. Let them recollect the avowed leaning of Theresa's to the vague and romantic, and the whole mass of opinions and sentiments which she had imbibed relative to De Bassenvelt, and they may imagine what she now felt again, in the certainty that he was once more beside her.

As she gazed, the figure respectfully withdrew, using the same kind of valedictory gesture she had observed the preceding night — and Theresa could not conceal from herself that she wished, hoped, longed for the too lingering avowal which Beatrice had led her to expect, and which circumstances seemed imperatively to require from De Bassenvelt's own lips.

"Oh, that he would now speak out, definitively and distinctly, that I might at once avow the deep passion which neither his pride nor generosity would allow him to combat, that I might tell him how I honour him — and love Lambert Boonen!"

So thought Theresa; but the figure silently and slowly moved away towards the secret door, and even then, by one of those indefinable shiftings of thought, which baffle calculation, an idea flashed across her — a something between hope and belief — that the apprentice himself had, by some arrangement with Beatrice, acquired means of ingress to her

chamber, and that it was actually he who now paid her this mysterious visit, gazing on her and blessing her, without breaking his pledge to leave her uninfluenced by him. Not caring to acknowledge that his presence even in silence was a virtual violation of that pledge, she was on the point of rushing forward towards him, and his name was on her half-open lips, when movement and utterance were both arrested by the renewed warbling of her lover's well-known voice, coming directly from the Wizard's Tower and across the court, in direct repetition of the strains which had just before so powerfully affected her. Her hands fell, by a spontaneous movement clasped across her bosom, as if the embodied spirit of the music had sought shelter and found it there.

The mysterious visiter slowly withdrew by the private door, and Theresa gazed for a minute into the vacant gloom ; then turned round to the casement again, and gave herself up to the delicious effect caused by her lover's voice, happy in the consciousness of his triumph over his powerful rival in this actual struggle for influence.

"No !" said she unconsciously aloud, as the last stanza of the roundelay died away, — "no, as long as one tone of that voice can make itself heard, I have nought to fear — I am *his* beyond the reach of temptations greater than those which assail me. Fear not, Lambert, for me or thyself ; I am thine for ever, in life or death !"

"Death !" said the echo from the Wizard's Tower, with a tone of subtle whispering not uncommon elsewhere, but peculiar to its walls as compared with other parts of the building, and which had long ranked among the mysterious attributes it was supposed to inherit from the dark being from whom its title was acquired. Theresa could not help shuddering, as her closing vow was thus sent back ; and it was only by its ominous repetition, she was aware that she had made even echo the confidant of her thoughts. But she scarcely regretted their involuntary utterance, in the hope that they had reached the ears of him who had inspired them. — The following morning was ushered in by a crash of warfare, to which the light skirmish of the previous day was child's play. Theresa's and Madame Marguerite's apartments were sheltered from all danger, and quite apart from the scene of conflict. And often did our heroine contrast the exquisite beauty of the prospect

from her casement to the southward, with those which the castle's western windows commanded. Swelling hills, covered with graceful woods, rich meadows, a smooth river, fantastic rocks, the distant town and church of Dinant, with its mixture of cupola and spire, and the imposing mass of granite rock standing high in its rear, formed the features of the scene which Theresa saw daily lighted by the meridian sun. But when he sloped towards his evening bed, he shone on the animated but revolting combinations of science and slaughter already described ; and day after day, as Theresa looked out on the quiet face of nature, her ears were assailed by the incongruous accompaniments of art's most discordant sounds.

But habit, nature's second self, quickly familiarised her with all this ; and ere many days elapsed, she slept as soundly through the thunder of the morning guns, as the roughest cannoneer who lay stretched on the stones beside them.

As incessant as the fire from culverin and falconet was the gentle assault kept up against Theresa's heart by the enthusiastic Beatrice, who lost no opportunity of urging Count Ivon's suit, while a continued discharge of the small shot of perseverance was kept up by Madame Marguerite for the same object. Lest this change in the good dame's tactics should surprise our readers, we must inform them that it was effected entirely through the medium of Lieutenant Gallagher, who, deep in the confidence, and warm in the interest, of his gallant colonel, had insinuated himself with marvellous speed into the good graces of the widow, for the sole purpose of winning her over to De Bassenvelt's object. This was most probably Count Ivon's own plan. Its execution however was admirable ; for Gallagher eminently possessed a share of that mealy-mouthedness, an indigenous quality of the Irish character, which existed even then, before the introduction of the prolific root to the influence of which it is in our day commonly ascribed. And Madame Marguerite, yielding to the irresistible blarney of the sport-loving lieutenant, was readily persuaded of Lyderic's baseness and Ivon's merits ; and she brought all her volubility into play to persuade Theresa, as if such fluency could ever become influence, or as though Theresa was of the same mould with those who are worn into a purpose by the mere dribbling of talk. Father Jerome, too, intrusted with

Count Ivon's views by the worthy widow, (for she and the priest had anticipated the modern satirist, and "sworn eternal friendship" on two days' intimacy,) came forward on all occasions as a volunteer in his patron's cause, and told Theresa many a true story of his generosity and courage. But De Bassenvelt's best auxiliaries for gaining ground in her favour were the constantly recurring proofs of his high and valorous mind, and of the unbounded influence he possessed on all those around him. Hundreds of human beings seemed to rest in devoted subserviency to him, and to be kept in it by a sway as gentle as it was irresistible. Theresa, arguing from natural logic, was satisfied that such effects could not follow an unworthy cause; and her admiration of De Bassenvelt was thus fostered by every extraneous and internal aid.

Each new day now brought some new conflict, and added to the infuriate rancour of besiegers and besieged. It has been seen that the former had gained gradual advantages, as is ever the case when a strong place is assailed by an adequate and determined force. Defence can be prolonged but to a certain point. Works must, with time, be battered down, provisions consumed, and garrisons worn away. All that is to be looked for is to keep off the fatal day of surrender to the latest possible period. In the present instance every thing gave evidence of such a course; and every tongue within the castle was loud in the praises of its heroic chief, of whose deeds of skill, valour, and perseverance every eye was witness.

During the whole of this terrible interval, the lady prisoners were treated in a way so distinguished and delicate, that but for the crash of artillery, the shouts of battle, and the groans of pain, too often borne to their ears, they might have supposed their entertainment the result of profound peace. Their table was served with luxury, and their wants profusely cared after; while Father Jerome was their constant companion, for propriety's sake, and Lieutenant Gallagher their frequent visiter, to cheer them by his vivacity, and encourage them by his boldness. He was selected for this duty by his chieftain, from his pre-eminent possession of these and the other qualifications, for which we have already given him credit. None other of the officers approached the ladies' apartments, rather to the dissatisfaction of Madame Marguerite, but at Theresa's

especial entreaty, addressed to Beatrice. A small court-yard, planted round with lime trees and acacias, and confined within the high walls of the building, was wholly allotted to their use. No windows looked into it, save their own, and one or two small grated casements of the Wizard's Tower; and not even from the latter could Theresa discover (as she would well have liked) one eye intruding on their hours of exercise and privacy.

Had she but caught an occasional glance of watchful tenderness, she would have felt it a support to her constancy, more than enough to counteract every opposing influence. But she had not now even the sounds of her lover's voice to come to her aid; for after a couple of night serenades, such as those we have described, the singing was heard no more, and Theresa was left in a desolate waste of doubt. She was now certain that the apprentice was gone forth on some bold and hazardous exploit; and when she attempted to gain information from Beatrice, the latter's ambiguous words alternately confirmed and weakened her belief; and at length gave her the startling notion that Lambert Boonen was removed beyond all communication with her by the jealous intervention of De Bassenvelt. In her conversations with Beatrice, the latter freely admitted Count Ivon's knowledge of the apprentice's passion; but she ever spoke of it in a way so contemptuous, as opposing an obstacle to his success, that Theresa could scarcely imagine him to have used any harsh or unfair means of riddance against a rival so beneath him in all the commonly-supposed qualifications for conquest. Yet the cessation of those nightly melodies, so painfully replaced by Beatrice's doubtful tone, excited for awhile an alarm that she vainly attempted to combat by such reasoning. But her disquiet found relief in the steady and encouraging assurances of Nona, who had freely avowed to her young mistress that she was from the first the confidant of the apprentice's designs, and of the prior's as well; and being, as she added, convinced that Theresa's happiness was inseparably joined with Lambert Boonen's, she cheered every failing hope, and strengthened each wavering sentiment that might bear attaint against his fidelity or her own. Theresa, long aware of Nona's devotion to the prior, of his attachment to his nephew, and of that nephew's passion for herself, saw in all the natural links of a fair and honourable

purpose, but nothing whatever of duplicity ; so completely does one's own secret inclination form the key-note to the accordant circumstances which take their tone from it. Thus supported, Theresa felt herself still able to maintain the internal conflict between her sworn affection against all opposing excitements ; and she lay down at night and rose in the morning with unshaken faith. At the same time, her reliance on De Bassenvelt's delicacy, and her admiration of his heroism, gained hourly strength ; and she as much loved to hear his praises during the day, as to wait for and watch those regular nocturnal visitings which brought, instead of alarm or doubt, increasing conviction of strict honour and protection.

Theresa's anxiety for her father's safety was by no means absorbed by her personal feelings ; but it was much abated by the considerations formerly detailed, and by renewed advices obtained from Brussels in the early days of the castle's siege, that De Bassenvelt's missive, shot into the city by the strong armed bowman, had secured the most honourable treatment to the still imprisoned burgomaster. His complicity with his apprentice, his serving man, and Renault Claassen, in Theresa's escape from Assembourg House, was known only to himself ; and her avowed seizure by De Bassenvelt, while it strengthened his security of fair treatment, for which the provost of Flanders was held hostage, brought the best consolation for her temporary loss, in the assurance that she was in the custody of him whom of all others he preferred for her protector and future husband. This much of her father's situation and sentiments was made known to her by Beatrice, as the sum of intelligence gained through Count Ivon's active emissaries. But the rapid and close blockade of the castle soon cut off all possibility of further advices ; and Theresa's filial anxiety, deprived of a channel for direct gratification, could only find relief in constant enquiries after the recovering health of the half-burned and safely-tended provost, on whose safety she felt her father's in a great measure dependent ; and who therefore required a double share of her attention, from the union of natural benevolence with that still stronger feeling of even the kindest natures — self-regard.

While the provost was thus carefully held hostage for Van Rozenhoed, his former fellow-sufferer and mutilated lieutenant, Louis Drankaert, was freely allowed to choose his own course.

He accordingly repaired to the town of Nimeguen on the Meuse, which held firm in its allegiance to the archdukes, and formed the main object of enterprise to the fierce activity of Martin Schenck, who had quickly taken possession of the strong fort which bore his own name two leagues distant on the right bank of the same river, where he had entered on a system of rapine and ravage, of which Lieutenant Gallagher had given a brief but harrowing sketch in his conversation with Madame Marguerite on the heights of Groenendael. The scattered bands of picaroons gradually entered into either service of the conflicting parties. Royalists and patriots obtained in them ready recruits and practised soldiers; but none of the commanders found them so effective as Martin Schenck, whose discipline was the edge of the sword. As long as information of the movements of friends and foes could be conveyed into the castle, Theresa obtained her full share of it, through the medium of Beatrice, Gallagher, and the chaplain; but after the expiration of a week, all those within the walls were left in ignorance of whatever was passing out of their sight, and thrown wholly on the one great purpose of their own defence. And thus matters went on, till the memorable evening of Barochio's death, on which such stirring feats were enacted, and which made such important changes in the plans and prospects of besiegers and besieged. The tumult within the garrison has been already described, as well as the successful efforts to arrest the progress of the mischief which it was impossible to repair. But it is more difficult to depict the consternation which seized on the thronged population, when informed of the ruin of such a vast and important part of the subsistence on which the defence of the castle depended. For it was not merely the pure waters of the Meuse that had been projected with such prodigious effect by Barochio's powerful constructions, the too cunning engineer having forced the subservient stream to pass through and amalgamate with reservoirs of atrocious mixtures, not poison properly so called, but matter full as noxious, which, blending with flour, meal, corn, wine, and rubbish of all sorts, formed a mass of abomination, that would have defied the whole powers of chemistry and thousands of its professors to reduce to its original elements. When De Bassenvelt, after the splendid exertions of valour and judgment so bravely seconded by his officers and men,

found himself once more master of the village and the whole of the contested space on the right bank of the river, he felt the painful certainty, on returning to the castle, that, without aid from Prince Maurice, he possessed no possible means of subsistence for its inmates for even another month. One method of relief was indeed practicable for a chief of another mould than De Bassenvelt, and has been practised ere then, and since — the driving out old men, women, and children, those helpless incumbrances, to die on the enemy's pikes, or perish by famine in the woods, but such a thought never entered his mind; and if any of his officers conceived it, they knew him too well to venture its suggestion. All, however, that prudence could do, consistent with humanity, was effected in this extremity.

The mere conception and arrangement of the various busy measures occupied Count Ivon the whole of the night on which they first became necessary; and amply was that night employed by every individual in the castle, all partaking the trouble and care it gave birth to, with perhaps the exception of Madame Marguerite, who saw no cause for either, in aught that now happened, being soothed in perfect serenity by the lullaby of Lieutenant Gallagher's palaver.

We need scarcely attempt to explain the variety of Theresa's emotions, during the rapid communications she received from Beatrice of the events of the evening and night, from the time of De Bassenvelt's and the Moriscoe's descent down the face of the rock, till midnight had brought a cessation of the harrowing sounds of external conflict and inward alarm. One only enquiry, ardently and tremblingly put, broke in upon the spoken bulletins thus constantly addressed by Beatrice: —

“And where, oh where, is Master Boonen in all this terrible tumult? Is he absent — is he inactive in this moment of general vigour? Is he, oh, is he safe?”

“Your lover, my sweet friend, bears his part in this trying hour. You shall not have to blush for, even though you be doomed to mourn him!” was Beatrice's brief reply, at once agitating and consoling. For despite Theresa's anxious efforts to be reconciled to the apprentice's hitherto unwarlike course, the vivid spirit of the times worked in her ardent character; and though Beatrice's words conveyed a distinct impression of her lover's exposure to the common danger, she was reconciled

to his being so, assured of his being near her, in preference to a chance of his safety in the vague hazards of absence.

Beatrice alone was doomed to the keen sufferings of suspense for the being most dear to her by natural ties ; for she, and she alone, was the confidant, as she had been the mover, of her brother's desperate undertaking. She had not dared to impart it to De Bassenvelt, knowing how a projected assassination would have revolted him. But she panted with anxiety to learn that the blow was struck, which would rid Count Ivon of a powerful enemy and revenge her own and her parents' wrongs ; and at the same time she shuddered with dread of the Moriscoe's failure, which she felt to be another word for his agonised death. She watched through the whole night for his return to the castle ; and the first dawn of morning saw her on the rampart platform, striving with keen gaze to pierce through the morning mists into the Spanish camp.

While Beatrice thus watched through the moonless hours, and listened to catch the sound of her brother's returning steps among the noises of the night, the manacled Moriscoe stood, fastened like some victim at the altar of sacrifice, a prey to the anguish of disappointment, disgrace, and anticipated death. The chain which held Gaspar's leg was of sufficient length to admit of his lying down on the ground, or of walking some paces in front of the earthen wall of the battery to which its other extremity was rivetted. In these various changes of position he had passed the hours between midnight and dawn — hours, which to Beatrice had seemed interminable, but to him like the flight of thought, for he felt that the first streak of morning would bring to him the darkness of the grave.

His gaze, intently fixed on the eastern horizon, at length distinguished a pale tinge of grey stealing on its verge, and imperceptibly dissolving as it were the thick gloom into liquid light. He was lying down as this signal of fate broke on him, and the chill of the earth seemed to curdle through his frame as he gazed.

"To the guns !" cried the officer in command of the battery close behind ; an instant's bustle told that the cannoneers sprang to their respective posts. Gaspar bounded from the earth, and in the convulsive instinct of alarm at the coming contest, he threw himself back against the battery's mound,

as though its support were in some sort a shelter. He grasped his chain, link by link, in either hand, gathered up the coils, and held them as a buckler of defence before his breast, every link rattling as he shook in a paroxysm of fear. That first fit over, alternate flushings and chills passed across him, and a rigid tension of nerve and muscle succeeded their apparent state of dislocation.

Minute followed minute, as Gaspar stood awaiting in terrible suspense the opening discharge of the artillery. He at times turned up his eyes to the line of grisly tubes projecting from the embrasures of the battery behind him, and watched for the simultaneous flashes from their twenty iron mouths. Then his quick glance shot across the river, and sought to distinguish the castle. Scarcely had he observed the shadowy indistinctness of towers and bastions, thrown out in black relief from the streaked brightness of the sky beyond, when a well-known word or two of command in the battery was followed by the instant application of each burning fuse, and the whole line of ordnance sent forth a salvo against the castle walls: the crash was stunning, and the shock threw forward the Moriscoe from the mound he leaned against. The river in front of the battery trembled in the concussion, and the intervening ground seemed for a moment to undulate like it. The rocks beyond echoed back the roar, and the grey cloud of smoke floating towards the stream was attracted to its surface and sailed along, like a mantle covering its quiet yet rapid course.

This opening burst from the main battery was the signal of general movement in the lines. The others, erected at intervals along the river's edge, now poured their angry assaults against the once more hostile village. And soon another and another discharge proclaimed the fierce energy with which Trovaldo's efforts were to be conducted against the particular part of the castle which he hoped to batter in breach. Gaspar, the while, trembled in every joint — for the first time in his long experience of the inspiring sound of cannon. Enveloped in smoke, and deafened by the incessant roar, he could see nothing but the sulphureous flashes above his head; and he thus stood in an agony of dread that each instant would bring some fatal bullet from the castle's answering guns to consummate his fate; but he was doomed to a more lingering expiation of his intended crime; for De Bassenvelt, resolved

to spare to the utmost his store of ammunition, had forbidden his cannoneers to return, as usual, the besieging salvos, until the dawn was sufficiently clear for every shot to see its mark and tell.

At the first sounds of the firing, Trovaldo, invigorated by two or three hours' sleep, and freed from his previous oppression, came forward, with a strong, bold step towards the northern battery, followed by his staff, and quickly joined by Lyderic, whom he had summoned by an aide-de-camp "to witness the execution of the renegade slave." Lyderic walked beside the general, silent and sullen, but inwardly rejoicing at the fate of him who had revealed his treachery to Ivon, had failed to rid him of his rivalry, and was the brother of her who scorned him.

As soon as Trovaldo found that the castle guns were silent, he ordered his own to cease firing, that he might mark the Moriscoe in his agony; and he commanded them to return none of the discharges from the castle till the victim fell, lest the smoke should obstruct his view of the catastrophe which he had come to gloat on. The salvos consequently ceased, and as the shroud of smoke rolled away, the Moriscoe, astonished that he still lived, had a full view of his abhorred and awe-inspiring master, with his myrmidons grouped at a short distance in cruel observance of him. A rush of pride, shame, and natural courage swelled in the Moriscoe's breast; the overpowering horror of his first sensations having subsided gave these better feelings time to rise. Gaspar remembered that he was a man, a soldier — had been, for a space, a freeman, and he now wound up his nerves to die as a hero might. Advancing to the full length of his chain, with as haughty a movement as its cumbrous weight allowed, and throwing a stare of scorn and hatred at the lookers on, he folded his arms, and stood with a full front facing the castle, braving the iron shower of death which his heart now throbbed for. His cheeks were deadly pale, his lips compressed, his eye fixed; every nerve, every feeling was on the utmost stretch, but he flinched not — though an electric thrill ran through him, when at length a flash broke from the castle rampart, and a quick following report told that the bullet was cutting its way through the air. It struck the parapet of the battery; and several succeeding

shots furrowed up the earth close around the Moriscoe, or passed in appalling proximity to him, and lodged in the earthen wall behind.

Trovaldo gazed with straining eyes. An occasional movement of compassion struggled with his fierce enjoyment. Had Gaspar but winced, he might, perhaps, have snatched him from the open jaws of destruction — but his unflinching bearing irritated and inflamed his cruel master, the worst feelings of whose nature crushed every rising effort of remorse. Lyderic and the other officers watched the spectacle in silence, and many of them in indifference. The cannoneers of the silent battery, maddened at being forced to bear without returning the fire that had already dismounted two of their guns, and slain double that number of the men, stood ardently out from the embrasures, or leant across the parapet, watching for the fall of the Moriscoe, which was to be the signal of their renewed discharges.

And at length the moment came ; the fire from the castle, as if in surprise at the silence of the battery, had slackened and ceased for a few seconds. Then one solitary gun sent out its thunder ; the Moriscoe, almost simultaneously with the sound, sprang with a mechanical jerk from the earth, and instantly fell.

A savage shout told the glee of the impatient cannoneers — their matches were at once on the touch-holes — a renewed crash burst from the cannons' throats — and a vollied mass of smoke again covered the scene. But ere the men could reload their guns, a trumpet blast from the general's side ordered another pause ; and, careless of the danger, he came forward, irresistibly impelled to examine the remains of his victim. But what was his astonishment, and that of his followers, as the smoke rolled away, to see the supposed dead man rushing to the water's edge, and trailing his long chain after him, with arms outspread, as if he would have made them wings of escape, and in a moment more a plunge into the river told that he sought another element for safety. Trovaldo stood for a moment transfixed.

" Fire at him ! Arquebusiers, fire ! " said Lyderic, never losing his presence of mind when cruelty required it.

" Hold ! " exclaimed Trovaldo. " Not a shot, at your life's

peril ! It is a miracle — praise be to the saints ! *Hagase el Milagro, y hagalo Mahoma !* " *

" A miracle ! a miracle ! " shouted the soldiers, ready alike for slaughter or superstition. Each arquebuss was in an instant laid down ; every knee sought the earth ; and the whole of the awe-struck beholders watched with anxious eyes the unmolested Moriscoe, who, despite the incumbrance of his heavy chain, swam to the opposite bank in safety.

The marvellous escape of this man was caused by a simple and not unique instance of good luck. The bullet that seemed to have killed him only broke the chain by which he was bound.† Its sudden snapping caused him to spring up and fall : the prompt instinct of self-preservation told him to rush at once to the river ; and it is such escapes as these that give to some men the reputation of a charmed life, and add strength to the worst dogma of the Moriscoe's own belief, which would rob *man* of the hope of God's providence, and *God* of the glory of that great attribute. But who, or what, might essay to shake the Moriscoe's confidence in destiny, when, on reaching the castle, and being once more clasped in his sister's embrace, he learned that it was she who, in half frantic dread of his detention and death, had seized a match, invoked the demons of vengeance, and fired at the hated foe the very gun whose bullet had severed his chain !

The interest of this adventure was quickly superseded by fast recurring events of individual and general excitement. Aben Farez, once more at liberty, turned his thoughts to some new enterprise to wipe away the stain of his last failure ; and Count Ivon, rejoicing at once in that failure and in his escape, gave him solemn injunctions against any further treacherous attempt on the person of Trovaldo, or even of Lyderic, whose existence was still more baneful to him. The atrocity of assassination was too frequently perpetrated in those wars, but in all instances by the Spaniards against the patriots. The Moriscoe, as has been seen, was bred in that school ; and Trovaldo was nothing loath to practise against his opponents the same means of riddance so often attempted, and too often

* " Let the miracle be done, though done by Mahomet," is an old Spanish proverb.

† A similar occurrence happened to a Turkish slave, on board a Spanish vessel, in a sea-fight about that time.

successfully. In the fatal instance of William, the father of Maurice, the great founder of his country's freedom and the prolific stem of his family's glory, suspicion exists, almost as strong as proof, that the Duke of Parma, himself a very hero in the field, connived at the murderer's plan, and followed up the villany of the odious Philip who excited it. But retaliation in kind, the *lex talionis*, was never practised by the patriots; and their long and bloody struggle is unsullied by that stain.

CHAPTER IV.

A MORE manly occasion for the exercise of the Moriscoe's courage almost immediately occurred. During the heat of the combat the preceding evening, when the castle troops had penetrated into the village, forcing back the royalists in all directions, a small party of twenty men, headed by a captain, were impetuously hurried on to the river's edge, and thence carried by a body of the flying enemy into one of the large boats by which they were effecting their escape across to the camp. They were thus made prisoners in the very moment of victory, by those they had themselves defeated. De Bassenvelt, who saw the transaction, as he fought his way in the enemy's entrenchments, wrote a letter the next morning to the unlucky captain, upbraiding him for having suffered himself and his twenty men to be so trepanned, even by double the number of the beaten foe. This letter was sent soon after the Moriscoe's escape to the castle, accompanied by a flag of truce, with a protest on the part of Count Ivon, addressed to Trovaldo, against any complicity on his part in the attempt on his life; and a proposal for a few hours' truce for the purpose of burying the dead.

Trovaldo, whose fury at the Moriscoe's escape had had time to recover its violence as his servile superstition subsided, received the bearer of De Bassenvelt's white flag with insult, and almost with outrage. But Lyderic, who foresaw reprisals, on the part of Prince Maurice and the Dutch troops, for any

excess on the side of the Spaniards, repressed the general's wrath, as anxiously as he would have encouraged it were its consequences to fall on him alone ; while Don Juan listened to his advice, and followed it, from the force of the habit he had acquired of receiving Lyderic's suggestions in spite of his jealousy towards him.

" Well, then, I will calmly read this rebel's communication ; though, by the mass, a feather's weight would turn the balance, and make me hang up his messenger like a dog."

A fierce look accompanied these words, as he tore away the envelope of Count Ivon's letter ; but the officer who bore it, thus menaced, leaned on his long rapier, with an air of swaggering indifference ; and seemed either not to hear or not to heed what so seriously concerned him ; nor did he show the slightest change, while Trovaldo broke out in the following strain, still in imperfect Walloon French,—

" Without his knowledge ! Let him then give up the assassin ! Will he do that ? Will he send back my slave, bound hand and foot, to pay his treason with his forfeit life ? Will he himself, arch-rebel as he is, yield his strong hold, and lay his outlawed head at his sovereign's feet ? A truce to bury the dead ! Let them rot under his nostrils first, and breed a plague for him and his base crew ! Will he do all this ? Is he ready at my summons ? Do you hear me, sirrah ? It is to you I speak."

" Indeed !" said the officer, with imperturbable coolness, and in the same mixed dialect with his savage interlocutor. " I really thought you were speaking to yourself, or some other of your staff."

" Fellow ! dog ! durst you——"

" Oh ! if that is the way you talk, Don Juan, I don't understand a word you're saying."

" Insolent villain !" exclaimed Trovaldo, almost choking with rage.

" Tut, tut—it's very plain you can't mean me, Don Juan ; so you had better turn your conversation to some one else. I don't hear you."

" Audacious ribald ! By the fires of purgatory, you shall hang !" exclaimed the general, with less violence and more dignity.

"By the flames of a hotter place than that, I shall *not*," replied the officer, with perfect composure.

"He blasphemes!" cried several voices. "A rope, a rope! Hang him up! Cut him down!" were vociferated by the group of armed men who surrounded Trovaldo; but his wrath decreased in proportion as they warmed, like all fiery substances which impart their caloric and grow cool. Swords were instantly drawn, and lances levelled; and the cumbrous locks of more than one arquebuss gave notice that their bearers were making them ready; while others ran in various directions, repeating the call for a rope. The officer saw that the moment was critical, and having gained his point of calming the general's rage, he lost no time in turning the new torrent he had provoked. Whatever he might have felt, he looked at least unruffled, and pointing to the white flag which he held in one hand, he said, in a loud and firm tone,—

"Don Juan de Trovaldo, officers and men, I warn you to beware, all of ye! You talk of hanging up and cutting down, but mark my words! If one drop of my blood stains this flag, or if one coil of a rope is cast round this neck, the provost of Flanders, and every Spanish prisoner in yonder castle, will swing from the rampart wall in an hour after. So hang me or shoot me, and that will be my consolation. But moreover, I am an officer in the service of the states general of Holland. Here is my commission. So hack me to pieces, or pike me, whichever you like best; and I promise you, gentlemen all, that Prince Maurice will do the same for every man, woman, and child of ye, one day or another. And more than that, I am a subject of her majesty the Queen of England, God bless her, though it's little good she ever did for me or mine! Here is my letter of license, as a free and independent adventurer, to sell my sword and my services, my life, and all other appurtenances, barring my allegiance, by land and by water, to any state, king, or people, all over the world, ay, or under it, down to the very antipodes themselves, signed with her own royal seal, and a great long ELIZABETH, in letters the length of my rapier; and I take leave to tell you, that if you lay a little finger on me, except in the way of fair fighting, or shaking hands at parting, that your very king on his throne won't be safe from my royal mistress's vengeance, not even if another invincible armada was to be conquered in the quarrel. And

also, it is myself, Lieutenant Thaddeus Gallagher, that tells you this—of a family older than your countryman Milesius, whose ancestors came from Seythia the year before the flood, when King Connal and his seven sons——”

“Cease, babbler!” cried Trovaldo, “I have listened to you too long. If, however, there is one word of truth in your tirade, and that one proves you a subject of the Queen of England, my gracious master’s royal ally, you are safe. Stand back all! Baron Roulemonde, examine his papers—see to the license he speaks of.”

“I think,” resumed Gallagher, sternly, “that Baron de Roulemonde can vouch for me, without looking at the license, if indeed the memory that forgets gratitude and friendship, and some other small trifles, is not too weak to keep hold of such a great one as the name and nation of a poor subaltern like myself.”

Lyderic examined the papers, apparently unheeding Gallagher’s blundering sarcasm, which was, however, clearly understood, and keenly relished, by Trovaldo, as was evinced by his hoarse laugh, and his immediate orders that Gallagher should be suffered to depart the camp unmolested.

“But my answer, Don Juan? Will you grant the truce, for sake of the feelings of humanity and of your own dead soldiers; to say nothing of decency, and the poor souls with not a handful of earth over them?”

“A mass shall be said for their souls ere noon. Let the bodies lie untouched by rebellion’s unconsecrated hands—quick from without our lines, good fellow!—You have your answer.”

“Now, then, Don Juan, take mine. I am no rebel—I am a gentleman adventurer, whose sword is without stain; and I swear by St. Patrick, as good an oath as ever slipped from lips, that this sword shall dig the graves of the brave fellows it killed last night—and a very pretty little heap there is of them. I put them to death without malice, and they shall not be left to taint the air with reproaches against me—these arms will give them honourable burial within this very hour, though every battery in your line was let loose upon me the while! That is my vow! I’ll keep it, so help me Heaven! Do for the rest as you like!”

Uncovering his head, and solemnly kissing the cross of his

rapier's hilt, the Catholic soldier's common pledge in those days, Gallagher then bowed courteously to those who were so lately on the point of immolating him, and turned away towards the river, accompanied by his trumpeter, and an escort to lead them through the lines. Trovaldo and the rest, including even Lyderic, were struck silent by the air of chivalric piety by which the brave Irishman seemed inspired. They gazed after him as he walked away; but he had not gone a hundred yards when he suddenly turned round again, and pulling a paper and a purse from his pocket, he advanced towards Trovaldo, and said,—

“Don Juan, with your permission, I forgot one half of my errand. I confide to your care this letter, and a supply of cash for my comrade Captain M'Intyre, who had the misfortune to be made prisoner by the very soldiers who were running away from him and his brave fellows.”

“Sir,” replied Trovaldo, haughtily, “it is well for this Scottish captain that he is, like yourself, the subject of the Queen of England. The money shall go safe to him—the letter I must read. Ha! what have we here? insult and injury lurking in every word or deed of this bold brigand! Cavaliers all, listen to this—it is thus the rebel writes to yon captive Scot:—

“‘The loss of a brave soldier like you is great, but the dishonour of your capture, with twenty of our gallant fellows, is greater. Double the number of the dastard foe should never have gained such a triumph. A score of freemen ought to match a hundred myrmidons of tyranny. I send you money, and hope soon to ransom you at the sword's point.

“‘IVON DE BASSEVELT.’

“Now, gentlemen, what say ye? Is this to be borne? Can Castilian blood run coolly in your veins while ye listen to language like this? Is no loyal Fleming ready to revenge himself on the traitor?”

“I am ready—I, who arrested the factious burgomaster in their highnesses' palace, and would now tear the outlaw from his fastness; I challenge any two of his troop to meet me and prove this,” exclaimed a rough Fleming, of gigantic stature, advancing in front of the group of officers.

"Bravo, Lekkerbeetje!" cried Trovaldo; and immediately almost every one of those warriors, with the exception of Lyderic, stood fiercely out, throwing looks of defiance at Gallagher, shaking their clenched fists towards the castle, or marking their indignation by various other gestures.

"Steady, steady, my friends!" cried Trovaldo, raising his hand; "a matter like this must be solemnly done. You are here full a score—nor can one man satisfy all. But mark me, my bold Irishman, for I must acknowledge your gallant bearing, I speak for my friends around me, and I send back by you, into De Bassenvelt's teeth, their defiance of him and his whole garrison. This fine fellow here, Gerard Abramzoon, or as he is familiarly called among us, Lekkerbeetje, their highness the archdukes' chamberlain, was the first to throw down his gauntlet in this quarrel. He and twenty more, now present, challenge to mortal fight as many of the rebel garrison—to meet, an hour before sunset, in the meadows yonder on the river's eastern bank, under the safe guarantee of honourable warfare, with armour and *armes blanches*, rapier and poniard, to fight this quarrel out, *à l'outrance*, and without quarter. Should my brave comrades conquer, as honour to the saints, they will, I trust! a helm and spear to be laid a tribute by your chieftain at the survivors' feet—should fate decide for you, the captive Scot and his fellow-prisoners to be liberated on the spot, without fee or ransom. To these conditions I pledge a soldier's faith, Juan de Trovaldo, Knight of the Golden Fleece, so help me Heaven! Lekkerbeetje, and my brave friends all, throw down each man his gage!"

On the word, one-and-twenty gloves were flung on the earth at Gallagher's feet. He looked at them for a few moments as if counting them, and then turning to Trovaldo, he said, in a tone of unusual animation,—

"Don Juan, this looks well. This is something like fair fighting, and it does me good to see it. This is better than pumping up the Meuse, to wash out our vaults, and drown the rats. Oh, St. Patrick! if the whole war was to be settled by this fight, how easy the sons of freedom might sleep in their beds to-night. Yes, I've counted them—twenty-one—all right, and I promise you a speedy answer to your challenge. But I must make one or two remarks. In the first place, I refuse, on behalf of my brother soldiers, Mynhear

Cracklejaw's first defiance, for no two gentlemen of De Bassenvelt's chasseurs could condescend to meet even a giant in single combat. But I think I know one, and that is Lieutenant Gallagher, who will measure swords before sunset with this Goliath of yours. And it would give me the greatest of pleasures if Baron de Roulemonde there would break a lance or a head with me on the same occasion. But *we* shall be there depend on my word; but on this one condition, that in the previous arrangements for the fight, the word *rebel* is heard no more. It would be neither becoming to us to brook it, nor to honourable gentlemen like these to cope in the lists with traitors. It is an ugly word, Don Juan, and the winning of a battle might change a rebel into a hero, you know — so consent for this day to give up the foul stigma, and here I throw down my gage."

"For this day, then, and in honour of this combat, I cancel the objectionable term," said Trovaldo.

"Then, Bassenvelt a-boo, agus Erin go Bragh! Whoop!" exclaimed Gallagher, forcibly dashing his glove on the ground, and at the same time jumping in the air, and slapping his ungloved hand against his thigh, with a vivacity strongly contrasted to the Spaniard's fierce gravity, and the heavy anger of the Flemings who made up the list of challengers. Gallagher was soon clear of the lines and returned from his mission; and, between castle and camp, the active stir of preparation and arrangement for combat was soon reciprocally heard and seen. Long before the appointed time, the rude and hastily constructed lists were arranged. The truce which Trovaldo had so peremptorily refused for the burial of the dead was freely conceded, to add new subjects for the grave. A total cessation of firing on either side was the silent evidence of temporary repose; and but for the rapid interments, to complete which advantage of the truce was taken by Gallagher and the men under his orders, the whole warlike scene at either side of the river might be supposed the mere pageantry of peace. The tilting-place in the appointed meadows was, however, far different in appearance from the lists of the then unfrequent tournaments; and the absence of the pomp and circumstance of those mock-heroine combats foretold the desperate reality of that which was about to take place. The sullen good faith preserved by the workmen and soldiers, who

fixed up and guarded the various barriers and standards marking the limits of the fight, spoke the dark enmity of their suppressed feelings. And all their duties went on in gloomy anxiety for the hour that was again to let loose their fierce passions, and see them quenched in blood.

The sun already sloped towards the verge of the forest, and the misty radii which dart visibly from him as he sets were evident in the western sky, when simultaneous trumpet blasts from camp and castle spoke the departure of the respective champions for the fatal rendezvous. Rafts and boats were soon seen to cross the river, filled with horses and armed men, each cavalier standing by the head of his good steed, his plumed helm and glittering armour in brilliant keeping with its rich caparisons. As soon as the boats reached the eastern bank, both men and coursers were landed, and an active vault into the saddle instantly joined them, apparent parts of the same gallant animal (as their similitudes had appeared to the astonished Peruvians), a union to be only severed by the death struggles of each. As the troop, with visors down and lances in rest, slowly advanced in double files from the water's edge to the lists, preceded by their trumpets and their herald in his glittering tabard, loud shouts of applause and encouragement rang along the Spanish lines, almost the entire besieging army having poured forth to witness the scene. Close following came the prisoners, the Scotch captain, and his twenty comrades, on foot without arms or harness, bare-headed, and escorted by a due number of men-at-arms. Next were the umpires for the royalist side, officers of high rank, with their pages, varlets, and a guard of honour, suitable to the important office they now filled; the whole cortège forming a gallant and imposing display.

Deeply contrasting with it, was now observed the garrison quota of combatants, umpires, and attendants in correspondent numbers — man for man, steed for steed, weapon for weapon — as they issued from the outer portal of the castle defences, and wound their way in solemn pace down the steep path that led circuitously to the meadows. Instead of a gaudy array of harness and housings, the castle champions showed no colours save black, in the armour of the men or the furniture of their steeds. The whole troop looked a moving mass of mourning, enough to strike gloom into opponents less resolved than theirs;

and the silence of their advance, for no shouts came from the castle walls, made it evident that they wanted no factitious aid to inflame them in the fight. Yet for two, at least, of this determined band, excitements were visible, such as might rouse the mildest temperament to a level with the boldest.

For standing out in a balcony, projecting from a small minaret-like turret that communicated by a winding stair with the picture gallery and the Wizard's Tower, were two figures, in anxious observance of the warrior procession, and following it with keen glances, from the moment it left the court-yard and defiled through the portal, of which the balcony commanded a view, that was extended beyond the walls and down to the very meadows where the fight was to take place. These observers were Beatrice and Theresa, the first watching her brother's figure among the cavaliers, with an intenseness of affection somewhat blended with envy that she could not partake his honourable perils—the other gazing, with a throbbing heart and pallid cheek, after one whom she had too clearly recognised to be him of whom, for so many weary days, she had no direct tidings, he whom she now knew more than ever to be entwined with every feeling of her heart.

Beatrice had not failed to make an immediate report to Theresa of the Moriscoe's almost miraculous escape, and also the result of Gallagher's mission, the challenge for the fight, and its instant acceptance by nineteen more of the castle inmates, who all, under Count Ivon's ready sanction, volunteered in a band to meet the defiance, with Gallagher as their leader. The twentieth place on the list could have been filled from a hundred candidates; but De Bassenvelt, when he made the challenge public, and asked for volunteers, not only restricted his few officers from being of the number, with the sole exception of Gallagher, but also when Aben Farez and eighteen of his brave chasseurs stepped forward, he stopped short all other aspirants, declaring that one place must be reserved for a person, for the mention of whose name he claimed exemption, but for whose honour he pledged himself responsible. The wish of the chieftain was a law—his voice an oracle, and the champions without further question commenced their preparations. De Bassenvelt appointed Don Diego Leonis and the senior captain of his regiment to be umpires in the fight, the Saxon major, formerly mentioned, having been, with

some other officers, killed during the operations of the siege. At the appointed time Gallagher found himself at the place of muster, and counted his full complement of twenty cavaliers, none to be distinguished from their fellows in the uniform suits of black mail, their closed visors, and the solemn silence in which they mustered and sallied forth.

These preliminary arrangements were communicated by Beatrice to her friend ; and also an intimation not quite obscure, that the twentieth place on this chivalric muster-roll would be filled by him who engrossed Theresa's thoughts, and who had sworn, by some deed of desperate gallantry, to merit her heart and hand. Luckily for our heroine this intimation was so closely followed by the rapid action of events, that suspense did not intervene to convert excitement into suffering. Following the guidance of Beatrice, she reached the balcony before mentioned ; and thence she plainly saw the movements of the departing warriors, who seemed to her as though marching to almost avoidless doom. One by one she marked them file away under the balcony and out at the portal ; and as each successive cavalier for awhile disappeared, her heart sunk lower and lower — for no sign of recognition, no movement of hand or head gave token of *his* gratitude, or cheered her anxiety. At every moment she grasped Beatrice's arm with a closer pressure ; and as the latest files came directly past, her eyes closed, as though sensation could no longer endure the struggle.

" Ah, my brother ! " exclaimed Beatrice ; and Theresa, starting into animation at the sound, observed the last but one of the departing horsemen, with his gauntleted hands raised to his helmet, in the gest of Moslem salutation. He recovered his bridle, grasped his lance more firmly, and passed on.

" And there ! " continued Beatrice, pointing down ; but a nervous scream of joy, or terror — it might be either, or both — burst from Theresa, and broke her companion's sentence.

" It is he — it is, it is ! " cried she ; and a rush of tears dimmed the object of this passionate exclamation. She dashed her tears rapidly away, and leaned forward, with open hands and straining eyes, as the last horseman reined up his steed, raised his visor, and directed a beaming look of confidence and love to meet her eloquent glance.

" Oh, Lambert, Lambert ! " cried she, " whither dost thou

go? Why must *thou* rush on this desperate enterprise? Oh, stay, stay!—this rash trial is not wanting to make me thine!”

The only reply to this apostrophe was a look directed on-wards towards the advancing troop, and a gesture of impatient appeal to her who would dissuade him from following in its track. She felt its full force—she blushed at her dishonouring exclamation—and answered by the forward motion of her extended arms in the direction of the battle-field. Another speaking glance, and his hand pressed on his heart, were the lover’s replies to her inspiring gesture. And while she shrank back, affrighted at the sentence of fierce peril she had pronounced, he drove his spurs into the courser’s flanks, and bounded forth to overtake his comrades on their course of victory or death.

Theresa and her bolder, but not less sensitive, companion, must be now left to the reader’s fancy, while we hurry on to the field with this band of chivalry.

The umpires, supported by their guards, were soon in their respective stations, at each side of the lists, near enough to mark the events of the fight, and watch over its details. The group of prisoners stood aloof on an elevated space, scantily guarded for form’s sake, but restrained by their sense of honour from any attempt at evasion, which the forthcoming bustle might favour. The royalist champions, chiefly Spaniards, but mixed with four or five Flemings, and an Italian or two, were now drawn up in line, headed by their colossal chief, Gerard Abramzoon. The garrison band soon took their position, a hundred yards in front of the enemy, Gallagher as their leader standing out a little space before. Scarcely were the spears, by common signal, set firm, the tightened reins grasped close, and every cavalier wound up in rigid valour, when a loud blast from the trumpets proclaimed the charge; and every spur was struck deep, every bounding hoof dashed into the earth, and in one rapid rush the combatants met together in deadly shock. A few riders were unhorsed, and some horses overthrown. Several of either party passed through the opposite lines as their opponents fell or were driven aside.

They then wheeled round to renew the charge, and by these means each side changed its original position. In this manoeuvre the large Flanders steeds were hard of management, being, in the words of Blundeville, a writer of that

time, "more meete for the shocke than to passe a *curvette* or *carrière*, because they be verie grosse and heavie," and the few royalist riders who were mounted on light Spanish jennets now found their advantage. But the lines soon formed again, and another charge took place, the trumpets still sounding an alarm. Then the shivered spears were cast from every hand, and rapiers were quickly drawn and dashing on mail and helm; and the combat immediately became one of detached groups or individual contest. Each man singled out his opponent, and in their desperate struggles many came to the ground, where, when swords were broken, or the combatants flung together to the earth, the poniard's point completed what the longer weapons had begun. Several on either side were thus soon despatched, the condition which precluded quarter being too faithfully observed. Those who survived the first onslaught, panting, and almost breathless from its fury, fought in their own despite with decreasing vigour. Pauses were made, vantage looked out, and positions taken which changed the impetuous complexion of the affair into one of cold-blooded slaughter. And the fiercest observer could scarcely fail to sicken at the exhausted efforts of brave men, to strangle or cut the throats of gallant enemies, and stifle their own wishes to show them mercy. Several of the wounded horses, freed from their riders, now plunged furiously round the plain, galloped over the prostrate champions, and often finished the work of death, by random strokes of their heavy-shod hoofs. The umpires and guards meanwhile looked on with an air as unruffled as they could command; and the group of prisoners stood, in anxiety which needs no description, inglorious spectators of a struggle on which depended their freedom or captivity, or, as it might eventually be, their lives.

In the early *mêlée* it was almost impossible to recognise individuals, from the similarity of armour and accoutrements. One alone was clearly distinguishable all through by his gigantic stature. This was *Lekkerbeetje*, who, on the opening shock, had overthrown Gallagher; and as the fight went on, he was seen, even when his horse, pierced with wounds, had sunk under his immense weight, to maintain his ground against several successive opponents, striding from place to place, and frequently by a blow of his ponderous weapon de-

ciding the struggle equally maintained between one of his own party and one of De Bassenvelt's.

But one pair of straining eyes that watched the fight had never for an instant lost sight of another combatant; nor will my readers require to be told that they were Theresa's, thus fixed as by talismanic influence on the person of her lover. Astonishment was at times mixed with her fears, at seeing, in the first instance, his bold and skilful management of the heavy war steed, and, when he was unhorsed in the mêlée, the impetuous activity with which he played his part in the deadly drama enacted before her. She did not know of what a true lover is capable, in the inspiring presence of her he loves; nor was she aware of the promptness with which a clever head and a bold heart accommodate themselves to new situations, even should they be incongruous to all former habits. A sense of proud delight at times rushed through Theresa's mind, on witnessing her lover's prowess, overcoming for a while her alarm for his safety: a glow of satisfaction that he thus redeemed his pledge—a confident hope in his escape and triumph—admiration at Count Ivon's magnanimity, in affording his rival this opportunity of emulating his own valour—again, a suspicion that he so favoured Lambert Boonen's wishes only to involve his life—and a chill of terror at his imminent danger thus again brought back to her heart. Such were the varied thoughts that darted athwart her mind: but her eyes never wandered from her lover's form; and during the rapid shiftings of the scene, it never for one instant escaped her view.

Within half an hour from the commencement of the fight full half those who began it were corpses on the plain, or lay gasping in the agonies of death. The survivors, most of them wounded, and all exhausted to the utmost, went on as best they might with their barbarous and bloody work. Here and there a couple were seen lying side by side, grappling at each other's throat, tearing handfulls of hair from their opponent's head, or faintly stabbing with their poniards at the most defenceless part of their form. In other places, two friends stood back to back, and resisted the attacks of their assailants. By slow and sad degrees the garrison champions had every one fallen, except the apprentice and the Moriscoe, the two against whom, at starting (from their light forms and less

apparent strength), the chances seemed the greatest. Opposed to them (as they stood back to back together in the way described, but not exactly touching, for Gallagher's still breathing though insensible body lay between them,) were *Lekkerbeetje* and four of his powerful companions, still unhurt amidst the desperate conflict. The exultation of the royalists, the despondency of the patriots, and the despair of the prisoners, were all at the highest pitch.

Lekkerbeetje and his four supporters, resolved to make quick work of their two remaining opponents, now pressed on, and dealt their blows and thrusts with a violence which for awhile proved the safety of their intended victims; for their long rapiers, clashing and crossing altogether, failed to reach the destined mark; and the brisk movements of the apprentice and the *Moriscoe* ensured to their assailants several wounds. One of the royalists fell; but they still found themselves so pressed by the four remaining sword-blades, that they found their only chance of safety was in breaking away and changing their tactics altogether, in imitation of the celebrated brothers of antiquity in a contest like their own.

Starting off, therefore, at a mutual signal, they apparently fled for several yards in different directions. Loud shouts burst from the royalist spectators. Don Diego Leonis and the rest of the garrison party were overwhelmed with shame and grief. We cannot attempt to describe the sensations of Theresa. But Beatrice quailed not.

"Fear nothing now, my friend," cried she; "the victory must be ours. It is now skill and presence of mind against brute force."

This confident exclamation gave little relief to Theresa, although she breathed freer when she saw her lover and the *Moriscoe*, almost at the same instant, stop and turn on their pursuers, who had, like them, divided, and followed in couples, and were now, consequently, two to one in their separate assaults. At the very instant the apprentice made a sudden stop, and turning round he plunged his sword into the body of the pursuer next to him. The man fell to the earth, and ere the weapon was extricated the other was close upon him. A desperate, but now an equal, contest began once more; and the patriots and the prisoners, in their turn, sent out a loud shout of applause. The fate of the *Moriscoe*, however,

quickly changed the current of these fluctuating tones, for *Lekkerbeetje* and the comrade who had singled him as their prey bore him down to the earth. The giant commander threw himself upon him, and holding him with one hand, leaned over him, supported on the other, recovering his breath previous to completing the butchery, at the same time motioning to his comrade to fly to the aid of the apprentice's opponent. This tacit order was in a moment or two obeyed. But the apprentice, on his approach, again trusting to his activity of limb, turned away and ran. The two royalists again pursued, but he far outstripped them, and by a quick and well-timed change of direction, ere they could turn their headlong course, he dashed strait to the spot where *Lekkerbeetje*, having drawn forth his dagger and bared the Moriscoe's throat, was on the very point of consummating his fate. The apprentice strained every nerve, in hopes to reach him unobserved, and to arrest his arm by the blow of death. But the hoarse shouts of his still running companions warned the giant of his danger. Casting a look on his coming assailant, now within ten yards of him, he changed his dagger into his left hand, grasped with his right the rapier that lay on the earth beside him, and rose up in appalling height. But before he could quite wield his weapons the apprentice darted in under his imperfect guard, and by a stroke across his unhelmed front he knocked him backwards, when coming against the Moriscoe's body, as the latter was springing again to his feet, he fairly fell to the earth, and ere he reached it a home-sent thrust from the apprentice's rapier gave him his mortal wound.

At sight of this catastrophe, and of the Moriscoe and the apprentice both again turned gallantly towards them, and stunned by the vociferated applause from the patriots, the two unfortunate royalists lost all presence of mind, all courage, and all sense of shame; and throwing aside their weapons they dropped on their knees, and cried aloud for mercy. The Moriscoe, like an unsated tiger, rushed on one of them, and was on the point of smiting him, when his arm was forcibly arrested by the apprentice's grasp, and thus the miserable remnants of the royalist party were snatched from their comrades' fate.

Fourteen of that party lay dead, including their commander. Six were desperately, if not all fatally, maimed. Nine

or ten of the patriot champions were slain, and all the others wounded more or less. The Moriscoe bled from a cut on the cheek which his helmet had prevented being mortal. The apprentice was slightly hurt in one shoulder by a rapier's point, and a side blow from another had glanced down his thigh.

When the issue of the fight was complete, the umpires, sustaining their dignified parts, and suppressing at each side their various feelings, declared, in a short announcement by their respective heralds, the result, broke up the lists, and pronounced the Scottish captain and his twenty comrades to be free.

The royalist troop, with muttered curses and dark scowls, slowly repaired to the river's side, where boats awaited them, carrying off their dead and wounded. The garrison band, with boisterous gratulations, surrounded the victors. The last glimpse which Theresa's streaming eyes caught of her lover's form beheld him in the act of taking off the helmet which he had borne all through the combat. The surrounding crowd then hid him from her view; but she heard another long protracted shout, or rather yell, burst from the group, in which all the elements of rapture and triumph seemed combined.

The rejoicing cavalcade soon came on towards the castle. The wounded were carefully carried on hand-litters — the dead remained on the field to be placed in a ready grave. Theresa and Beatrice, clasped in each other's arms, watched speechlessly the approaching group. Beatrice bore the sight of triumph well, and grew calmer as the shouts of victory came closer. But when Theresa again caught her lover's upturned gaze of impassioned tenderness, and saw him borne along with acclamations from the whole garrison that almost stifled the loud salute of the trumpets and the artillery, the rush of joy and gratitude to Heaven was too much for her: she sunk back in a swoon of ecstasy.

The sun was just down at this consummation of the desperate and barbarous scene. But its final close was in still more savage keeping with the half-civilised fierceness of the times. The two ill-fated royalists who had shrunk from an honourable death, and even thrown away their fair chance of final victory, were instantly sacrificed to Trovaldo's infuriate resentment. Ere the sun's last rays ceased to gild the castle's

topmost minaret, these hapless wretches swung, hanging from a gibbet erected close to the river's edge; and the gazing army of the besiegers gloomily prepared for a morrow of desperate vengeance.

CHAPTER V.

THERESA had not sunk into insensibility; for though her eyes were closed she heard the confused buzz of acclamation, and felt the supporting arms of Beatrice, who drew her from the balcony into the castle. She was even conscious of the way by which Beatrice half carried, half led her along; and could count every step of descent, trace every turn and winding of the various passages, and finally knew that she reposed on a bench in the picture gallery, close by the principal casement. She soon heard the indistinct murmurs of two voices, and felt the pressure of more hands than one, touching successively the nerves of her wrist through which the throbbings of pulsation are easiest detected.

A crowd of strange emotions rushed upon her as she thus lay. With the acuteness acquired by one sense from the suppression of another, she was conscious, or believed herself so, of the identity of the fingers which pressed her hand or touched her arm. Fancy, almost as active as if she had been really under the influence of a vision, pictured the figure of Lambert Boonen tenderly hanging over her, and her ears eagerly strained to catch the tones of his voice. Her efforts to revive seemed to propel the blood from her heart, and she felt it tingle through her veins, swell in her lips, and colour her cheeks again. Her limbs began to move, her eyelids, too, trembled into life once more; and all these symptoms of recovered sensation were evident to the observers as quickly as they were felt by her, as was proved by her being suddenly left alone. When her eyes opened wide, and she sprang from her recumbent posture, no faces, save the murky portraits, in their huge and dust-covered frames, met her piercing gaze.

Disappointed and confounded she looked again and again

into every recess where it was possible a figure could be concealed. She was sure that her lover had been there a moment before ; the warm pressure of his hand thrilled on hers. Or was it, could it be that of another ? of another *lover* ? Was Lambert Boonen already the victim of his own daring ? Had De Bassenvelt in envy or jealousy dealt foully by him, and already usurped his place ? These and a hundred other torturing cogitations sprang into life and died in their very birth.

The sun had by this time totally withdrawn, and the dim twilight scarcely penetrated the high and narrow casements. The greater part of the gallery was in shade, only relieved by the darker tints of the black oak wainscoting, or the heavy draperies of purple Ypres velvet, loaded with the dust of full half a century. The huge carved picture-frames, incrusting with mould, and hanging forward from the walls, threw deeper shadows across the gallery, and the portraits dimly staring out seemed to grow into congenial life in this atmosphere of mystery and gloom. The common external noises were hushed ; the cannons had ceased their usual roar, and the distant murmurings within the castle harmonised with, without interrupting, the vague solemnity around.

Theresa was by no means one of those bold exceptions to the age in which she lived, who occasionally spurn the laws that bind human nature in a revolving coil of prejudice and superstition. She partook, as has been shown, of the latter infirmity, in a lesser degree than might have been expected from her hereditary temperament and conventual education, but sufficiently to make her now shudder, in the conviction that she was in the chosen haunt of spirits of another world, and the close neighbourhood where the unhallowed practices of art had often forced their appearance in this. The creeping dread that suddenly possessed her was speedily combatted by her natural strength of mind, which suggested the only remedy she was conscious of, against fears which it could not reject. She had promptly recourse to prayer, and repeated in pious trepidation several of the most approved conjurations of the existing ritual against ghosts and sorcery ; when in a returning paroxysm of fear she saw plainly the outline of a figure, which she could not minutely distinguish, but which at once struck her as the same that stood represented close to her, in the por-

trait of René the wizard. She did not see the face, but the draped costume was precisely similar, and the wand which the painted resemblance held in its hand was now evidently shaken in that of the figure. It moved slowly towards the stairs leading to the tower, the door of which it softly opened, and then disappeared.

Theresa was for a moment or two stunned by this apparition. But her late train of feeling had strengthened, and, as she then felt, enlightened her mind. She had no doubt but that this was a trick arranged by Beatrice and De Bassenvelt. A glow of resentment followed the thought. She instantly recovered her courage in the rush of contempt at the unworthy farce ; and with a hasty step, indicative of her resentment, she gained her own apartments, where she found Madame Marguerite and the chaplain discussing the merits of the combat which had just taken place.

The every-day topics of the siege were now, on all occasions, canvassed by Madame Marguerite, as freely as though they were of the most indifferent import. The noise of the cannon no longer frightened her. Remote from the sufferings of the garrison, she considered their conflicts but as the sports of gallant men ; and in her own fancied security she had no anxiety for the perils of others. Her mind, so to call it, was purely matter of fact. Imagination was a dead letter with her ; and consequently she had little or none of the finer sympathies of nature, almost all of which have their source in *it*. Lieutenant Gallagher's flattery was her supreme delight ; and in his absence she had infinite pleasure in the gossip of Father Jerome. She spoke at times of Lyderic de Roulemonde as a monster, and had apparently altogether forgotten the Marquess of Assembourg. Nothing, in short, went actually ill with her. But she was beginning to feel some qualms of dissatisfaction within the last few days, on learning the impossibility of being supplied with fresh butter or even milk, a serious privation to her who was so long accustomed to be served from the overflowing dairies of Flanders. When told that the cows were obliged to be killed, from want of provender, and to afford a scanty ration of meat to the garrison, she pitied the brutes, and had a sort of blunted sympathy with the men, because their evils were associated with her own. But she consoled herself as well as she could with the spiced condiments, sweet-

meats, and other delicacies which gave to her and Theresa's table a sufficient stock of equivalents for what was curtailed.

Her conversation with the chaplain now turned chiefly on the matter of the approaching supper, but still mixed with the main subject of the day; for Father Jerome had attended on several of the wounded and dying champions, and gleaned from their accounts a smattering of the events of the fight. Father Jerome was accustomed to these things. He shrived a man, and sent his soul on its immortal journey, as methodically as the bungling surgeon bandaged a cicatrix, or cut off a limb. For he cared little for common-place events, unless they might be in some way tinged with a dash of sorcery, the most dearly cherished of his superstitions. He was, on the present occasion, quite in his element; for having, like so many others, witnessed the fight, he pronounced the conduct of the victors to be the undoubted effect of magic.

"Besides which," continued the chaplain, "it cannot be denied that Count Ivon, my noble patron, notwithstanding his mockery on the subject of the black art, is deeply imbued with its mysteries. How, indeed, could he shake off the hereditary effects of centuries? does not the blood of Count René run in his veins?"

As Father Jerome spoke, Theresa felt an involuntary thrill; but sceptical, from the mere force of insulted pride, she looked with contempt on the chaplain and Madame Marguerite, as they both made signs of the cross, and muttered prayers to lay the spirits which their superstitious terrors had raised.

"And well may it now be believed," resumed Father Jerome, "that the noble Count Ivon avails himself, in these desperate times, of all aid from hereditary rights. Far be it from me, a Christian priest, to encourage unhallowed practices. But if too powerful enemies assail the righteous, let us hope that Heaven will pardon what it does not authorise! And then what says Martin Delrio in his divine work on magic, just lately printed, section seventh of the fourteenth chapter? Does he not prove——"

"Nay, my good father," said Theresa, with a smile, "he can scarcely prove aught against Count Ivon's practices to-day!"

"True, fair daughter, nor did I say he could directly, although he may by inference—for if he prove (as assuredly he

does) that men may mix in battle, and do wondrous deeds by the dark aids of magic, and if Count Ivon employ (as he undoubtedly did) a champion of more than mortal prowess, one unknown, furtively introduced into the ranks ——”

“Is this so, indeed?”

“Ay, indeed is it,” exclaimed Madame Marguerite, impatient of her long silence, and the priest’s long sentences; “and more than that, lights and sounds have for nights past been heard and seen issuing from the Wizard’s Tower.”

“Ay,” said the priest, “and old Ambrose Moenants, and Hugh the falconer, have vowed that the night last past they saw the figure of Count René himself, with his divining rod in his hand, and in his cap and robes, stalking through the gallery, and on the topmost ridge of the tower. And well may Count Ivon, Heaven absolve him! hold parley with his wizard progenitor, and seek magic aid for the protection of his castle, which mortal power cannot much longer defend!”

“Not much longer!” exclaimed Madame Marguerite in consternation — “why I thought it was impregnable! Dear Lieutenant Gallagher told me so a dozen times—you terrify me, good father.”

“Impregnable, indeed,” resumed the chaplain, “if men remain enough to garrison it, and subsistence and munitions of war hold out; but much I suspect, though it be out of my immediate province to have actual cognisance of the fact, that the short allowance of the past week will be made shorter by one half for that which is coming.”

“Holy saints! short allowance!” cried Madame Marguerite.

“Be explicit, good father; is the castle reduced indeed to such straits?” enquired Theresa, anxiously, for she had hitherto seen no symptoms of distress, except in the trifling privations before mentioned, nor had Beatrice or others given her the remotest hint that such existed.

“Ay, verily, fair damsel, is it reduced to straits—for three days past our gallant Count Ivon and his brave men have eat nothing but horse-flesh.”

“Holy Virgin! horse-flesh!” echoed Madame Marguerite, while Theresa started in mixed surprise and disgust.

“Yes, my respectable dame,” continued Father Jerome, drily, “and tender and delicate food it is in times of sack and

siege like these. By and by we shall all be well off if an occasional cat, a few rats ——”

“ Ah ! ” screamed Madame Marguerite, in a climax of despair, shutting her eyes, and hugging Fanchon in a close embrace, while the pampered animal seemed instinctively to cling to the shelter of her bosom. Theresa felt deeply all the seriousness of the prospect opened by these words of the chaplain. She did not give a thought to the considerations that agonised Madame Marguerite ; but she grew pale with dread of a speedy surrender of the castle, which the failure of provisions would assuredly cause. A thousand associations of terror crowded at once upon her. She sat silent and absorbed for some time, scarcely conscious of the conversation which still went on between her kinswoman and the chaplain, and which embraced every point of immediate and petty interest, without ever extending to subjects of real importance to themselves or others. The bruises of Lieutenant Gallagher formed the topic that most affected Madame Marguerite after those strictly personal to herself. Her chief solace appeared to be in the discussion of a pasty and some baked fruits, which were placed on the table by Nona ; but though assured by Father Jerome that the pasty was composed of tame rabbits, of which a sufficient supply for “ the ladies’ table ” was carefully preserved, the scrupulous dame minutely scrutinised every morsel, lest a portion of some still more domestic animal might be concealed under the savoury blandishments of cookery.

Theresa partook but slightly of the repast, and retired to her bedroom with a heavy heart. She endeavoured to glean information from Nona ; but she had as yet found little consolation from her : Nona never spoke to her with frankness. She was evidently oppressed by the rapidly approaching crisis of her young mistress’s fate. Her confidential connection with Lambert Boonen and Prior Wolfert seemed to weigh upon her ; and her natural reserve on the subject of their designs on Theresa was heightened by the mingled dignity and delicacy of the latter, which made her shrink from a too familiar communication with even this faithful dependent, on matters involving every finer feeling of her lover as well as herself. She had a pride in the solitude of suffering, that scorned any confidence but with his heart for whom she suf-

ferred ; and in such a mood did she now deeply ruminate on all the intricate difficulties of her situation. Rapid flashes of thought lighted in all its breadth and depth of colouring the mental picture that opened out before her. Her father's and the prior's doubtful, and De Bassenvelt's desperate, state, the too probable triumph of Lyderic and Trovaldo, Lambert Boonen's perilous position—the mystery, the excitement, the agitation that surrounded her, seemed all converging to one point.

It was in this state of too painful acuteness, when every event of her life rose clearly before her, that she remembered, for the first time since she had parted from him under the ramparts of Brussels, the timid, faithful, and devoted Renault Claassen. She felt a throb of remorse at the ingratitude of her forgetfulness. At the same instant an involuntary contrast presented itself between his gentle conduct, the impetuous fervour of De Bassenvelt, the irresistible, yet too incredulous, tenderness of Lambert Boonen. She could not restrain a consciousness that she was the inspiration of such deep, yet such varied, attachments. Even the minor degrees of homage she had received from her other suitors brought pleasant associations with their recollection ; and she was, after hours of thought, at length finally sinking into quiet slumber, when the striking of the castle clock imperfectly aroused her. She knew not how many peals had been sounded, but she felt a mysterious thrill as the recollection of the picture gallery came upon her. She looked beyond the curtains on the faintly glimmering lamp, and she distinguished, with a sensation less of fear than pleasure, a figure close to her bedside. She had become familiar with this visitation. Its regular repetitions were at once a tribute of respect and a pledge of security. The character of our heroine, of her times, and her peculiar situation, must be once more borne in mind by the shrinking fair ones of the present day, who should recollect that what is delicacy in one century would have been but prudery in another. Even in the year 1600, a high sense of chivalrous gallantry, as to acts, held the place which is now usurped by fastidiousness as to forms. These considerations, and many others arising from the events of the tale, must account for, if they may not excuse, Theresa's now raising herself in her bed, with the anxious certainty of discovering in the face of

her nocturnal visiter that of De Bassenvelt, who for the first time had ventured into the scrutiny of lamp light.

The very lamp in an expiring effort seemed at last to favour her wishes ; it threw a sudden and broad gleam across the apartment, and distinctly revealed both form and face. It was beyond all doubt the embodied likeness of Count René, the wizard ! Theresa's brain was clear, her attention fixed, her heart fearless. Her first thought on observing the robe, the wand, the cuirass, was that Count Ivon, in pursuance of the masquerade she had before suspected, had, as in the picture gallery, assumed this costume to forward his mysterious plan. But she could not now be deceived as to the general likeness so correspondent with the portrait of the wizard count, in age and expression, and showing the apparent reality of actual life. The gleam of the lamp was not of the fitful kind that might be produced by trick to favour a momentary effect. It was broad and continuous, and lasted until the figure, after a benedictory gesture, moved out by the secret door, while Theresa followed it with a fixed, but not a terrified, gaze. She felt all the awe of a virtuous mind, but none of the fear of a weak one. She had no doubt but that she saw a spirit from another world, but she considered it a token of protection. With a theretofore unfelt steadiness of courage, and elevation of heart, she fervently addressed a prayer to Heaven ; and placing her trust above, she resisted every thought that would lose itself in mysterious speculations, quietly laid her head on her pillow, and after a short interval sank into a profound sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

FOR three weeks after the day recorded in the last chapter, the events at Welbasch Castle proceeded in a rapid yet monotonous movement towards a sure catastrophe, like the waters of a river hurrying on to the precipice over whose brink they must inevitably fall. The general course of circumstances in a beleaguered town or fort may be imagined — continual

fatigue, peril, privation, and consequent excitement, varied by local accidents or individual character. That of the commander must greatly influence the complexion of the whole. If he be ardent, resolute, and young, vigour and enterprise will characterise his struggles. It may be well supposed that De Bassenvelt's conduct was strongly marked by these qualities; but joined to them was a tact of cautious dissimulation peculiar to his own nature, perhaps to that of his whole race, and varying with wile and stratagem his daring feats in war, as well as in love.

Theresa, in her hours of deep reflection, had a clear conception of this union in the character of the man with whom her own destiny seemed now more than ever linked. But far above all revolving doubts and fears for herself arose her apprehension for Lambert Boonen. In his unpractised, and to her view his artless, nature, she imagined nothing suitable to cope with De Bassenvelt, a rival at whose mercy she held him to be. His timid incredulity of his own influence on her was strikingly contrasted with that rival's bold reliance on himself, and she felt that his best security rested on Count Ivon's respect for her father, and his passion for her; but she still doubted if even these, though they might doubly ensure the apprentice-lover from any open violence, would protect him from private treachery — for she feared that the impetuous yet cautious De Bassenvelt was, on occasion, capable of using either.

Of Beatrice she scarcely knew what to think, in connection with this chief topic of her mind. She had her constant assurance of Lambert Boonen's safety and of Count Ivon's utter indifference to the pretensions of one whom she professed him to consider as a mere shadow; and at times Theresa thought, with delight, that this arrogant self-confidence might be a further safeguard to her favoured lover. But this absorbing subject, rendering her suspicious of all who might influence it, made her alive to many discrepancies in Beatrice's manner and words. Still she remembered her late ungrounded fears for the apprentice's safety; and she consoled herself for his renewed absence from her presence, and the cessation of even his night songs from the tower, in the belief (which, however, she did not venture to communicate to Beatrice,) that he had, under some pretext, left the castle, and risked the perils of a

return to Brussels to seek her father, acquaint him with his exploit, and demand his consent to his pretensions for her hand. Theresa's next train of thought was in the self-put questions — "How then is he to snatch me from this stronghold — how separate my fate from De Bassenvelt's — how save himself and me from the difficulties and dangers which surround us every way?"

Overwhelmed by the greatness of the impediments to her happiness, and afraid that Lambert Boonen was not the being to surmount them, she shrank from their contemplation; but she could never dismiss these reflections from her mind, without their being instantly followed by the thought — Had Count Ivon been so circumstanced, now would *he* have triumphed over all! This involuntary recurrence to De Bassenvelt's superiority was fraught with pain. Turn as she might, she saw no chance of escape, either from personal risks or mental reveries.

Added to these fruitful sources of care was the solemn oppression that rested on her ever since the apparition that she had so distinctly witnessed. That it was a spirit of another world she had no doubt. That Count Ivon had not been her nocturnal visiter, that it was not his hands which had been, night after night, raised up in blessings over her, was now too plain. What a sinking of the heart followed the oft-rising regret! how much less was she shocked at the presence of the spirit than by the absence of the man! She would willingly have unburdened her mind of this solemn secret, but no one was near to whom she could do so. The frivolous Father Jerome she never thought of as the depositary of her confessions. She dared not make that sacred obligation of her sect a mere matter of form or pious fraud. She could not encounter Beatrice's bitter scorn of every mystery connected with Christian faith. To none others within her reach would she condescend to enter on the subject. How she longed for her father's affection, for the prior's holy privilege, for Lambert Boonen's sympathy, in any of which to repose her secret! What a blank was around her!

The apparition had no more appeared to Theresa, but the whole population of the castle were loud in the belief that the ghost of Count René had been repeatedly seen in his favourite tower; and the conviction that Ivon was enjoying the super-

natural support of his ancestor's magical powers had infused into the soldiers a fresh confidence, which rose above all the actual suffering and approaching horrors of their desperate situation. This feeling was strongly cultivated and encouraged by De Bassenvelt, who, by his own practices or opinions what they might, knew well how to profit by the weaknesses of men, and that the empire of imagination is more potent than the influence of fact.

Day after day the resources of the garrison rapidly failed. Stinted allowances reduced the strength and weakened the spirit of the bravest men. Affairs had not reached that crisis when starvation renders them reckless, and despair new nerves the arm. But it seemed close at hand; and at the very time when all were agreed in considering it inevitable, a most unlooked-for circumstance occurred, that gave a likelihood of escape from the horrors of famine, or the accessory modes of destruction too commonly dealt out to subdued rebels, as De Bassenvelt and his followers were sure to be considered. The works of the besiegers had been pushed to the closest limits. Mines were effected under the castle walls; and a breach practicable and complete gaped in the fortress's shattered side. One day alone appeared to intervene between the garrison and inevitable ruin.

It was now the latter end of May, when, on one of those mornings when hope and sunshine seem to come down together upon earth, and to brighten irresistibly the beings most evidently miserable, the hungry sentinels on the castle ramparts descried a boat passing across the river from the royalist camp, containing, to their astonishment, four or five unarmed men, and a white standard, the common emblem of peace, and in this instance its hoped for harbinger. The officer in command of the outermost gate of the fortress soon hurried to its portal to receive the flag of truce. The village, after several days of hard-fought resistance, having again fallen into the possession of the besiegers, no more distant point of protection kept off their approaches. Officers and soldiers alike hailed the coming pacificators with delight; but still they were veterans sufficiently aware of the guiles of warfare to expose no indication of such a feeling.

It was therefore to a most stern summons (issuing from a bristling wall of lances, and a gaping line of wide-mouthed

arquebuses,) that the herald, whose trumpet had sounded a parley, in his turn answered as follows : —

“ In the name of their highnesses the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, sovereigns of the Low Countries, of Holland, Zealand, and Brabant, I Nicholas Mengs, herald of the honourable Order of the Fleece, vulgarly called the Golden Fleece, do hereby summon this revolted fortress of Welbasch, and its chieftain Count Ivon de Bassenvelt, to receive and hearken to, in truce and good faith, the puissant Seigneur Joseph-Paul-Pontis, Marquess of Assembourg, their highnesses special and extraordinary envoy and ambassador, duly authorised and appointed to treat of the surrender of this said fortress of Welbasch to its allegiance, on such conditions as may be graciously set forth, in their highnesses’ name, by the aforesaid puissant Seigneur Joseph-Paul-Pontis, Marquess of Assembourg.”

“ Enough said, sir herald,” replied Lieutenant Gallagher, the officer on duty. “ Before you can blow another blast on your trumpet, or shake your truncheon over your head, I will send a messenger to the puissant Count Ivon de Bassenvelt to tell him your business. But in the mean time stand back, I warn you — and particularly that old shaking gentleman in the rose-coloured roquelaure. These lances are sharp, and the triggers of these arquebuses often slip without being pulled ; and a chance blade or bullet might find its way among ye — so stand back till your answer comes !”

The Marquess of Assembourg and his escort quickly acted on this hint, the marquess himself retiring from the line of possible danger with all the shrinking obsequiousness of courtly manners and weak nerves. His companions, three persons in plain suits, and the herald, in all the gaudy trappings of his profession, followed the ambassador’s movement ; and the whole group stood on one side of the portal, looking upon the fierce garniture that protruded from every casemate and barbacan, or bristled above the wall of the bastion where Gallagher had taken his post. A full hour elapsed before any notice was taken of the summons. Gallagher sent messenger after messenger to the castle, but none of them returned ; while the anxious soldiers were filled with impatience, and the marquess not a little alarmed at the delay, and more than once strongly tempted to turn his back and run, rather than brave the questionable reception which awaited his mission. At

length, ere his doubts could acquire the perfect consistency of cowardice, the first drawbridge was lowered, the portcullis raised, and Paul Cuyper, the genealogist, was discovered on a bare-boned horse, (representing the dignity of seneschal, which post, like several others, was vacant in De Bassenvelt's imperfect household,) accompanied by an esquire, a trumpeter, and other attendants in due form. As the marquess advanced, in reply to a summons from the esquire and a flourish on the trumpet, Cuyper with mock solemnity and well-travestied punctilio mouthed forth an invitation that the ambassador should repair to the castle, and deliver his message to Count Ivon in person. A moment's trepidation assailed the marquess, as he cast his eyes under the archway and saw the formidable vista of defences extending to the very body of the fortress; but he felt the impossibility of receding from his task, and with the valour of necessity he submitted to have his eyes bandaged, and gave himself up to his conductors.

When he had liberty of sight once more, he discovered himself to be in the gothic dining-hall of Welbasch, and his first sensation was a disagreeable one, on perceiving the grotesque and ill-favoured countenances of eastern stamp, which ornamented, as the reader will recollect, the cornices and niches of the hall. But the living faces around him were infinitely more appalling, for they were those of three or four gaunt and fierce-looking officers of De Bassenvelt's regiment, who stood with their colonel himself, sternly awaiting the diplomatic overture which the marquess was expected to propose. On discovering himself thus suddenly confronted with the much dreaded black dragoons, he lost all presence of mind, and with the overabundant civility of alarm, he bent and bowed, and uttered sundry compliments to the group of officers, in all the "taffeta phrase and silken terms" of courtly usage. Totally forgetting all his previous notions of De Bassenvelt's appearance, he was quite at a loss to distinguish him among the group, all their uniforms being the same. But attributing to the imposing height and pompous bearing of one of the officers all the qualifications for command, he addressed to him some confused and broken fragments of an oft-conned oration which he had prepared for the occasion.

"May you live to the age of Saint Service, which was full three hundred years. most powerful plenipotentiary!" ex

claimed the officer, interrupting him with Spanish grandiloquence, and in bad French. — “Your air and style prove high-breeding, thick blood, and discrimination to boot. For though I cannot exactly catch the tenor of your speech, it no doubt contains sentiments worthy of being addressed to me, Don Diego Leonis, so called from having killed three lions, single handed, on the Barbary coast, lieutenant-colonel in De Bassenvelt’s black dragoons, and who should be, if reward was proportioned to merit, one of the hundred and fifty-one knights of the Golden Fleece.”

The marquess not fully comprehending the don, and (with the fine sensitiveness of his caste) alarmed lest the smiles of the listeners were at his own expense, stammered forth some answer, still less intelligible than his former attempts, inasmuch as a courtier’s fear of ridicule is even more potent than personal dread. But Count Ivon came to the ambassador’s relief, by avowing himself, and requesting that his propositions and credentials might be forthwith addressed to him. The marquess, re-assured by De Bassenvelt’s courteous tone, instantly produced his warrant, and began, with less confusion, to read from a scroll, to which was attached a large medallion of white wax stamped with the archducal signet, a list of propositions, “on which their highnesses,” he said, “were graciously disposed, in the spirit of Christian mercy and princely magnanimity, to extend their clemency to him and his revolted troops. And in choosing me,” continued the marquess, “to fill the honourable office of this embassy, in preference to a soldier by profession, they have proved their pacific forbearance in a way which no doubt will make due impression.”

He then recapitulated the conditions proposed for surrender and free pardon, which only differed from those offered at the same period to the revolted garrisons of Crevecoeur and St. Andrew’s in the addition of one article, claiming the instant relinquishment of all right of detention to the persons of the Dame Marguerite de Lovenskerke and the damsel Theresa van Rozenhoed, and a peremptory demand to deliver them instantly up to the Marquess of Assembourg, to be conveyed back to his house at Brussels whence they had been abstracted with force and treachery by persons unknown, but supposed to have been agents of Count Ivon de Bassenvelt, into whose power they had notoriously fallen.

“Such,” said the marquess, with great suavity, and gradually gaining his self-possession,—“such are the magnanimous proposals which my royal masters the archdukes have condescended to make. It is not for me their poor servant to dilate on the advantages which these terms hold out to you, Count Ivon de Bassenvelt, and the gallant and honourable gentlemen who compose your garrison. Nor need I dwell on the very disagreeable consequences which a rejection would bring to you and them, this very eve of destruction, — to wit, famine, starvation, assault, pillage, plunder, cutting of throats, and sundry other inconveniences ; for when the place falls to-morrow into the hands of the brave Don Juan de Trovaldo and the accomplished Baron Lyderic de Roulemonde, they are resolved to spare neither sex, age, nor condition. Therefore —”

“Stop there, most noble marquess,” said De Bassenvelt. “I see the fiery glances of my gallant friends here at the threat you utter in the name of a base renegade against his old companions and fellow-soldiers. As to the savage resolutions of Don Juan de Trovaldo, let him put them into execution if he can. We pardon him the intention in consideration of his rank and station. He is a fair enemy. But as for the other person you have named, his threats are, like himself, beneath all notice, except from the sympathy of those degenerate parasites who, like him, abandon the cause of their country, and yoke themselves in the train of foreign tyranny. Let his name be mentioned no more !”

With these words, Count Ivon’s eyes, whose general expression was of warm tenderness, sparkled with a brightness that seemed to pierce the marquess’s attenuated frame, and fluttered his frill and ruffles of Mechlin lace, like a sunbeam dancing through the foliage of an aspen. He began to stammer forth a reply. But De Bassenvelt, instantly resuming his tone and manner of peculiar courtesy, advanced still closer, and said, with a smile, —

“Marquess, excuse me, I pray, if your mention of a worthless name has betrayed me into a moment’s warmth. To you, individually, I would do all honour, as well as to the office in virtue of which you favour my castle with your presence. I would fain have given an old acquaintance of my father a better reception. But such as the times allow of, you shall

have ; you will adjourn with me to partake of a beleaguered fortress's fare, and such as it is, it shall not be followed, I promise you, by the treatment ere now dealt to honourable men, after the treacherous repast served by archducal and archdevilish hypocrisy. In the mean time my answer for me and my garrison shall be considered ; and as to the dame and the damsel who honour our poor walls with their presence, while their natural protector is held in base durance at Brussels, I refer you to them for their own decision. They are at liberty to act for themselves in all things. And now, to partake such cheer as we may afford you ! Your attendants are cared after without."

The marquess followed De Bassenvelt's movement through the folding doors into an inner room, by no means rendered easier in his feelings by the revived mention of the outlawed Count Gabriel, the sire of such a son, nor by the severe allusion to the repast at which he had himself presided previous to the arrest of Van Rozenhoed and the other deputies of Bruges ; and still less by the involuntary mixture of sternness with civility in Count Ivon's look and tone. Deeply repenting the fear of confessing himself afraid, which had made him accept the appointment to this perilous embassy, the poor marquess mechanically took his seat at the board, in obedience to De Bassenvelt's invitation ; and the latter also, with Don Diego Leonis, Captain M'Intyre, and three or four others of the superior officers, assumed their places, grasped the clumsy, long-bladed, and sharp-pointed knives, and prepared to wield the huge two-pronged iron forks, which were among the most recently introduced luxuries of those days.

" Remove the covers !" said De Bassenvelt to the attendants, and immediately the large and shining copper cones, which served to keep the viands warm as they were carried through the vaults and corridors leading from the kitchen, were taken off, and the savoury fumes that steamed up produced an evident, but, as the marquess thought, a very ill-bred, demonstration of lip-smacking delight upon his entertainers.

" Marquess," said De Bassenvelt, with much gravity, " will you permit me to offer you a portion of this hashed horse-flesh ?"

The marquess sprang up three inches from his oaken chair, and as soon as he could recover his electrified faculties he

stammered an excuse. But De Bassenvelt, waving ceremony, had not waited for the refusal, but passed the dish round to his hungry companions ; and before the marquess could at all regain his composure he perceived that the horrid ragoût was cleanly devoured.

"Most illustrious ambassador," exclaimed Don Diego Leonis, who sat at the end of the table opposite to his chief, "may I have the felicity of serving your excellency to some of this stewed jackass, a preparation of infinite virtue in cases of over-active appetite?"

"With great gratitude, most honourable Don Diego, for the polite offer so graciously made me ——" began the marquess ; but ere he half-finished the preliminary phrase of his intended refusal, the pewter platter had gone its rounds, and was emptied of its revolting contents with magical celerity.

The half of a roasted dog was the next discovered dish, and Captain M'Intyre, with imperturbable solemnity, offered a share of it to the still astonished marquess, who saw it vanish as the other delicacies had done, before he could muster up a suitable sentence of refusal. A cat pie and some fricaseed mice were successively handed round to him. He protested he did not feel in the least degree hungry ; and as the last-mentioned abomination was greedily devoured, his disgust became uncontrollable. A dessert of onions, raw turnips, and horse radish, rapidly placed on the board*, was not sufficient to bring back his stomach to its wonted equilibrium ; and pledging to the health of his host in a goblet of water, the only visible beverage, he claimed permission to rise from table, and to be allowed to pay his respects to Madame Marguerite and Theresa, and make them a communication on the part of the worshipful burgomaster of Bruges, who, he begged leave to state, was already, through the archduke's clemency, in full possession of his personal liberty, as was attested in a letter to his daughter, written by his own hand.

Count Ivon immediately rose ; and beckoning from the outer hall an officer, whose youthful air and unwhiskered face of dark grave beauty seemed fitting to a messenger for a lady's bower, he despatched the substance of the marquess's request to the lady prisoners. An order to have Lieutenant Gallagher

* The description of a parallel repast is given by some of the Flemish historians, as having formed a wedding feast during the siege of Cambrai, in the year 1581.

relieved from his guard, and a private message to him and the chaplain to prepare them for the marquess's visit, were simultaneously given by Count Ivon; and ere a quarter of an hour elapsed, the same young officer (who was none other than Beatrice) preceded the courtly steps of the ambassador along the passages leading to the ladies' apartments.

As the marquess entered Theresa's antechamber, Lieutenant Gallagher swaggered out of it; and when Beatrice opened the door of the saloon, he observed the figure of an ecclesiastic gliding through another at the opposite end of the room. Theresa and Madame Marguerite were seated with due decorum. Beatrice closed the door, and the marquess advanced, made a succession of profound bows, and at length spoke.

"Ah! my dear ladies, my respectable dame, my lovely damsel, how may I express in suitable terms my profound sorrow to see you in this state of thralldom! How describe the respect and attachment which has made me brave all the perils of this terrible place to accomplish your liberty!"

"Pray do not give yourself that trouble, marquess," said Madame Marguerite; "your grief will find utterance if it is sincere; and as to your courage, methinks it is not marvellous if it only brave dangers which a couple of women do not tremble at. If, indeed, you had come in a suit of Seville armour, casque on head, and lance in rest, as befits a champion and a true knight, well and good; but who ever gained liberty for imprisoned maid or widow in a cambric ruff, a cloth of gold vest, embroidered gloves, crimson hose, and velvet brodequins! — Talk not, prithee, of attachment or respect, and least of all of aught that is chivalric and brave."

Theresa, compassionating the confusion into which the poor marquess was thrown by this tirade, rose from her chair, and with a graceful air approached and begged him to be seated. She then assured him of the grateful sense she retained of his hospitable and delicate treatment of herself and her kinswoman during the short period they had occupied his mansion, and as little abruptly as possible, she requested tidings of her father.

"Gladly, most amiable young lady, do I hasten to communicate intelligence of your very worshipful parent. Here is a letter, intrusted to my care, from the excellent burgo-master's own hand. It will speak more to the purpose than

my feeble testimony to his health, happiness, and restoration to liberty and honour."

"Heaven be praised!" exclaimed Theresa. "Oh, how grateful I am for this news! Madame Marguerite, do you hear this? — oh, thank the marquess for me — for us both — while I read my dear father's letter!"

She retired to a distant recess, broke the seal, and began to read; while the marquess, in recovered confidence at her words, approached Madame Marguerite, and with an insinuating air strove, and not unsuccessfully, to bring her to reason. With as little circumlocution as was compatible with his artificial style of speech, he commenced a train of statements of all that had passed at court, the intrigues of the courtiers, the preparations for the campaign, the force of Trovaldo's army, the certain and immediate ruin that awaited De Bassenvelt, if he rejected the terms of surrender; and wound up all with a picture of the disgrace which would await a person of her quality (supposing her to escape the horrors of the coming assault) in being included among a rebel garrison, and marched back a prisoner to Brussels. He touched on the splendour and munificence of the archdukes, spoke of the prodigious liking they had taken to Lyderic, and their determination to marry him to Theresa. But the marquess struck a tenderer chord than all the others, in declaring that "with the sanction of the archduchess herself, and the certainty of a distinguished station in the household, suitable to the rank of the marchioness of Assembourg, he had, after full consideration, made up his mind to offer himself, his fortune, and his honours, for her acceptance, too happy in the hope of reviving in her heart ever so feeble a spark of that flame of conjugal delight which had whilom made Ralpho de Lovenskerke the most envied of husbands."

"Oh, my dear marquess!" exclaimed Madame Marguerite, "how you overwhelm me! I am quite taken by surprise — how gallant, how generous you are! How exquisite to be rescued by you from this horrid haunt of rebellion and magic! But in so delicate an affair, on a point so tender, you must suffer me to consult a friend."

"Amiable woman! assuredly. — Who? Your lovely young cousin yonder?"

"Oh no, no!"

"What, the holy man whom I saw retire from the chamber as I entered?"

"No, no, not him."

"Who else then may it be, excellent lady, that can in this den of outlawry claim the gentle title of friendship with the virtue, the blood, the beauty of the Lovenskerkes?"

"Ah, eloquent and elegant marquess!" rejoined the blushing dame, (half turning her face, that the time-touched features might be taken in profile,) "it is indeed a dear and confidential friend with whom I would in decorum consult—one Lieutenant Gallagher, a young Irishman of old family——"

"Humph!" interrupted the marquess—"a young Irishman!"

"Oh," exclaimed the dame, somewhat alarmed at any hesitation on his part, "if you, marquess, have the remotest shade of objection, I wave my wish at once."

"By no means, dearest Madame Marguerite; only that it struck me just that these Irish adventurers—pardon the phrase—who swarm in these countries, have a wild and wavering reputation when female friendship is in question."

"Ah, if you but knew *him*, marquess!"

"Whatever you please, gentlest and best of your sex! Your friends shall be my friends, and yourself all things and every thing to me."

"Oh, marquess!"

"Ah, Madame Marguerite!"

But the tenderness of the colloquy was cut short by the entrance of Lieutenant Gallagher himself, who came by Count Ivon's orders to announce to the marquess that a second flag of truce had arrived at the castle outworks, despatched by the Spanish general, who had become impatient, and somewhat anxious at the ambassador's delay. The marquess, despite the tenderness of the situation, felt his heart beat with joy at so honourable an excuse for escaping from the manifold terrors of Welbasch Castle, and he pressed Madame Marguerite's immediate decision and departure, with an ardour that her simplicity placed solely to the score of her own attractions and his passion. She therefore proceeded to *consult* with her dear friend Gallagher, in the usual tone and manner of those who are resolved to follow their own advice in cases where their minds are already made up. Nor was she slightly

mortified at the readiness and *nonchalance* with which the lieutenant assented to her plan, strongly recommending her "to take the old marquess at his word, wrap herself up in his rose-coloured roquelaure, and be off with him to Brussels, ere his proposal had time to cool." The cutting cold-heartedness of this speech brought the tears into Madame Marguerite's eyes, like the keen air of a frosty morning. Equally alive to unkindness as sensible of the contrary, she saw at a glance how cheap the Irishman held her; and clearly perceiving that he was glad to be rid of her, she flounced away and told the marquess, with a burst of mingled mortification and modesty, that she was his from that instant for life and death.

During Madame Marguerite's and Gallagher's short consultation, the marquess had approached Theresa to urge her immediate departure, with her kinswoman, under his protection. Her notice of his proposal was the utterance of one phrase, more in soliloquy than reply, —

"Can my father have written this letter!" and at the same time her eyes continued fixed on the document which she had read over and over.

"Lady," exclaimed the marquess, rather impatiently, "I saw him write it in the very cabinet of his excellency Don Zeronimo Zaputa, who most kindly assisted him in its composition; and it was afterwards given to me by your father's own hands, while he walked in the grand audience hall of the palace, where he was taking the air, followed closely by a royal halberdier, so honourable is his treatment by their highnesses' state minister."

"Dictated by Zaputa! attended by a halberdier!" repeated Theresa.

"And, pardon a thousand times, my dear young lady!" continued the marquess, "if the onerous obligations of my present functions, and personal agitation on another point, have made me too long forgetful that the accomplished and gallant Baron Lyderic de Roulemonde, panting to urge for himself the hopes which your father's letter in his favour so strongly justifies, has sent with me on this mission his own trusty follower and devoted partisan, the young tanner of Bruges, who has also just seen your father at Brussels, and of whom you may recollect we conversed on the very night of your and my beloved friend Madame Marguerite's extraor-

dinary abduction from my mansion, the details of which I am at a calmer and cooler period to learn. This young man, specially charged by the amiable baron to see and communicate with you, now waits with my own immediate attendants in some of the precincts of this awful place, but will, no doubt, at your request, receive instant admission to your presence."

While the marquess spoke, Theresa felt her cheeks burn. A confidence that the devoted attachment of Renault Claassen to her alone had prompted whatever measures he had taken, and reliance on the prudence inspired by his fidelity, made her glow with joy. And she felt irresistibly convinced that he now came at all risks, baffling De Roulemonde and braving De Bassenvelt, to announce some co-operation with Lambert Boonen for her escape. Her eyes sparkled with a brightness which the marquess considered the natural consequence of Lyderic's message; and she immediately requested Gallagher to demand, on her part, Count Ivon's assent to the admission of the person named Claassen, forming one of the marquess's suite. While Gallagher retired in pursuance of her wish, and the marquess received from Madame Marguerite the rapid assurance of her readiness to set out, Theresa again read her father's letter; and then plainly saw in every line the forced influence of the minister, prompting to a pretended freeman, but a virtual prisoner, praises of Lyderic, and commands for her acceptance of his suit, which she knew his heart must have abhorred.

Madame Marguerite quickly commenced her bustling preparations, taking it for granted that Theresa would accompany her, and forgetting, in the new impulse that hurried her away, all her so lately formed impressions and friendships. She announced her approaching departure to Nona, who showed evident symptoms of pleasure at the news. The marquess meanwhile repaired to the hall, once more to receive, in due form, De Bassenvelt's answer to his proposals; and he had no sooner left our heroine's presence, than Renault Claassen was ushered into it by Gallagher, who as instantly withdrew.

Left alone with the object of his soul's devotion, the young tanner felt an instant return of that overpowering timidity which paralyses every chance of success for such a lover — at

least with such a being as Theresa. She was forced to take the lead in the hurried colloquy ; and his very answers to her questions betrayed a confusion which, by one less convinced of his honour, might have been ascribed to treachery. Enough, however, was explained to convince her that he had only still kept up the semblance of complicity in his father's treason, as the means of serving her ; that he had obtained, through Lyderic's interest, an appointment in the civil department attached to the besieging army, where, in conjunction with Jans Broeklaer, who acted under him, he watched every movement of the siege, to be ready at an emergency to aid her escape from the double dangers that beset her ; and that having avoided all suspicion of being an agent in her flight from Brussels, he was employed by Lyderic in frequent communications with that place, and with her father, in whose confidence he was completely. Theresa now had her suspicions of her father's situation fully confirmed. With the nominal privilege of freedom, he was in fact a state prisoner, under strict surveillance, and violent measures against him were only withheld by Lyderic's influence, until he succeeded in obtaining Theresa for himself, and a consequent right to the confiscated property, which was held out as the sure reward of success against De Bassenvelt. His friend Don Zeronimo Zaputa had also obtained the archduke's consent to the mission of the Marquess d'Assembourg, and Isabella's sanction to his intended offer to Madame Marguerite, in the hope that all these complicated motives might influence the conduct of Theresa, on which so many interests now hinged. A scrap of paper, written in the burgomaster's hand, and with difficulty secreted by Claassen, was now given to Theresa. It contained but one sentence.

" In my letter, dictated by Zaputa, and written but to temporise with our tyrants, read Ivon de Bassenvelt, instead of Lyderic de Roulemonde, and you will know my inflexible decision."

This was indeed a sentence decisive of all Theresa's fondly cherished hopes, and utterly destructive of Lambert Boonen's chance of obtaining her. In the letter referred to, nothing could be more strong than the terms of approval and the tone of decision, in favour of the suitor whose name was now, it would seem, so indelibly fixed on. Theresa felt the chill

palor steal on her cheeks, and into her quivering lips, which then, for the first time during the conference, ventured to utter the one name that they had twenty times silently syllabled.

"And Master Lambert Boonen! Have you, Mynheer Claassen, nothing to tell of him?" was her faint question.

"Nothing," replied Renault. "From the night that we parted beyond the glaxis of Brussels, I have seen or heard nought of him."

"Then I am indeed a wretch!" exclaimed Theresa, covering her face with her hands, and sinking on a seat.

"How am I to understand this?" cried Renault. "Are then, indeed, my father's notions true, and is Master Boonen the happy mortal who has gained your heart? Oh, say if it be so, that I may know the true way of doing you service. Ignorant of every thing but my devotion to your happiness, I thought I was forwarding it best in being the medium of whatever linked you closer to Count Ivon de Bassenvelt. Recommended by Prince Maurice, approved by your father, and himself so irresistible, what else could I have supposed?"

"Since I entered this castle, I have never seen Count Ivon's face, nor heard him speak."

"Indeed! What then was his design in forcibly seizing you — what his present motives? How am I to reconcile all this?"

"Oh, Mynheer Claassen, think not of it now. Let one confession, forced from me by my misery, suffice. I am sworn, vowed to Master Boonen, by the holiest pledges of faith and honour. For weeks he has ceased to appear to me as he was for a while allowed to do. He has done a deed of desperate gallantry; and while I believed — oh, how fatally believed — him to be urging his suit to my father, he is, too much, I fear me, lost to me for ever. Oh, in pity seek him out! Devote all your energy to that only object for which I value hope or life! My eternal gratitude will be yours. You have saved him once before. You acted with him for me — now, act with *me* in discovering him."

"Good God! how surprised, how overwhelmed I am at this strange news!" murmured Renault.

"Oh, in mercy to me, give no way to surprise just now. Let energy and courage fill your heart. Think only of one

object. Let the image of Lambert Boonen, suffering perhaps all the agony of captivity, be alone in your sight. Fly to seek him — he is your friend — he is my lover, my chosen, my betrothed ! If indeed he still live — if jealous hatred has not already killed him, and doomed me to utter despair !”

At this moment Beatrice entered the room, and advancing to Renault Claassen, who stood almost stupified under the influence of Theresa’s suffering, she said that she came to interrupt the interview, on the urgent behalf of Master Lambert Boonen, who having heard that his friend Mynheer Claassen was in the castle, had requested his presence, even for a moment, in Count René’s tower.

There are emotions of piercing joy that break in upon the deepest grief, which the pen may as vainly attempt to describe, as may the pencil to give the colouring of those vivid sunbursts which dart athwart a lowering sky. And until the pen can become liquid with the heart’s own essence, or the pencil be dipped in the golden hues of heaven, the task had better be unattempted quite. Such a rush, such a pang let it be called, of delight broke on Theresa at Beatrice’s words. She had no power to speak or move. She heard a voice of reprieve from the living death to which her fears had doomed her. She stood benumbed and motionless, and saw Beatrice and Renault Claassen leave the room, unable to utter a single sentence of all she would have given worlds to express. She was almost immediately roused from this state by the simultaneous return of Madame Marguerite, equipped for departure, and the Marquess of Assembourg, with signs of consternation on his visage far surpassing any thing that had been previously witnessed in the castle since the commencement of the siege. The causes of this climax of his terrors may be shortly told.

When he repaired to the great hall on Count Ivon’s summons, he found it thronged with officers and soldiers. Their haggard, half starved, desperate looks were more appalling still than the display of swords and spears which rose above their heads or glittered in their hands. Count Ivon stood at the end of the hall ; and as the marquess (following Gallagher’s steps) tremblingly took his place beside him, he spoke, holding at the same time a written scroll in his hand, —

“ Marquess of Assembourg, in the presence of all my officers and soldiers composing this garrison, except those on

immediate duty or unable from unhealed wounds to muster here, I have to commit to you, in my own and their joint name, our brief reply to the proposals of surrender of which you have been the bearer. In a deed like this every man here is equal. All are alike concerned, and you can testify to your masters that all are unanimous. Listen then to our answer !”

Then opening out the scroll, he read aloud, —

“ To the Archdukes Albert and Isabella, the assumed sovereigns of Holland, Flanders, and Brabant, usurping deputies of Spanish tyranny, we, Ivon de Bassenvelt and four hundred and sixty-eight officers and soldiers composing this garrison of Welbasch, do, with scorn and defiance, reject the proffered terms — preferring glory to gain, and death to dishonour — swearing by the memory of our comrades killed already in the conflict, in the name of our country which watches our career, and in the sight of Heaven, to whom we commit our souls, that we will die, with the old men, the women, and children barbarously forced in upon us, inch by inch, by famine and disease, or perish each and all in the rubbish of these walls and the blood of our enemies, sooner than surrender the fortress, or hold further communication with them except at the sword’s point. — So help us Heaven !”

A deep buzz of approval breathed through the throng of armed men, and rolled up to the vaulted roofs, more like the solemn heavings of broad breasts in prayer, than the enthusiastic burst of valour from excited hearts. The awful intensity of the sounds curdled the marquess’s blood, and made his flesh creep. No man stirred from his place, nor flourished his blade, nor raised his voice for some moments — but at length the fixed solemnity of the scene was interrupted by Don Diego Leonis, who, raising his arm, exclaimed in a tone of deep reality, that perhaps for the first time in his life deprived his exaggerated phrases of any ludicrous effect, —

“ Marquess, envoy, ambassador, or by whatever title we must accord you, you have seen to-day the fare on which we feed. Think not that when even such as that is exhausted that we shall be in want ; for as long as our left arms hang to our bodies we shall not starve, but will gnaw them to the

bone, reserving our good right hands to fight for and hold fast the cause we are sworn to !”

The fierce murmur of applause and the ferocious and cannibal grin, which seemed the general echo of this speech, almost deprived the marquess of his senses outright.

“ Comrades, to your quarters all !” said De Bassenvelt, in the firm deep tone of command. The crowded mass immediately moved off by the various entrances, with a heavy and hollow tramp, in the silent steadiness of desperation.

“ Marquess, farewell ! Safe conduct waits on you under the guidance of this officer,” courteously exclaimed Count Ivon. The marquess unconsciously stammered forth some reply, and followed Lieutenant Gallagher to Theresa’s apartment. Breathing shortly and wiping his clammy brow, he sat down on the nearest seat, and readily accepted Madame Marguerite’s offer of some cordial of a special virtue, of which the urgent wants of the garrison had not deprived her. A rapid debate now took place on the subject of Theresa’s movements : Madame Marguerite considered even hesitation as little less than insanity ; but when convinced by Theresa’s positive manner that she was resolved not to quit the castle, she believed that the sudden privilege of escape had actually turned her brain. She appealed to the marquess, to Nona, and to Trinette, who were both busily employed in preparing her packages, if they were not authorised in using force to obtain a lunatic’s compliance with measures for her own safety. Father Jerome appearing at the moment to take leave, she next turned for advice to him ; and in the mean time the marquess, somewhat recovered, exerted all his eloquence to influence Theresa’s departure. She replied to all these persuasions with a calm refusal ; and at length the re-appearance of Renault Claassen, still under Beatrice’s convoy, made her spring from the torturing solicitations that assailed her, to make one breathless enquiry which need scarcely be repeated here.

“ I *have* seen him — he is well and safe — his only object in seeing me was that I might certify to you that he was so, and assure you from him that to-morrow would end all doubts, all cares, and in its results be conclusive of your joint destiny. He entreats you to wait with courage and confidence for these results. He bids you remember that he is near you, watching

over you, and giving his whole mind to your safety. And, thus having done his bidding, oh, let me add that I too am utterly devoted to you. Let what will hang on the terrible issue of to-morrow, remember that I shall be ready with him — your lover — and your old tried follower, Jans Broeklaer, to snatch you from every peril that the victor or the vanquished, that De Roulemonde or De Bassenvelt, may doom you to. We shall be at the proper moment for escape, at the point from whence to quit the castle. So cared for, keep a good heart. The object dearest to all parties is your safety ; and Heaven cannot, will not, cease to shield its best and brightest work !”

These impassioned words were scarce uttered, when Lieutenant Gallagher once more appeared, summoning the marquess, and announcing a fresh parly, and a violent demand for him on the part of Trovaldo. The marquess, rejoiced at the summons, seized Madame Marguerite by the arm, and declared, that as Theresa was wilfully bent on her own destruction, no more could be done than to leave her to her fate.

“ Be it so, be it so, unfortunate girl !” exclaimed Madame Marguerite ; “ let’s away, let’s away ! But ah ! heaven and Saint Agnes save me ! What has become of my dear Fanchon, my precious and beloved Fanchon ? Oh, where is she, where is she ? Nona, Trinette, Father Jerome, Theresa, Beatrice, Lieutenant Gallagher ! tell me, oh, tell me, some one, — where is my beloved Fanchon ?”

This was uttered in a burst of sincere affection and imploring gesticulations to each individual. They all unfeignedly pitied her, even in that moment of such varied agitation ; for evident sincerity, even when it is the proof of weakness, is sure to command sympathy. But none present, with one exception, were able to answer her almost frantic enquiries. That one was Trinette, whose artless countenance could not conceal a deep glow of self-betrayal. The keenness of Madame Marguerite’s alarm quickly discovered these signs of confusion ; and she instantly threw herself upon Trinette, caught her in her arms, and with half-choked utterance, and a flood of tears, she implored her to restore her much-loved favourite.

Trinette, in her turn totally overcome, dropped on her

knees, and supplicated Madame Marguerite's forgiveness, saying that it was not her own doing, but that she could not refuse the repeated entreaties of Mathieu Toolmans, the under cook (and notoriously her lover), who at last swore he would take the pampered animal by force if she persisted in refusing to procure it for him.

Madame Marguerite listened, almost petrified with dread. But she revived again, when Trinette proposed to fly instantly to the kitchen and see if it was not too late.

"Too late!" murmured Madame Marguerite faintly, as she sank on a chair and seized the marquess's trembling arm. Ere the latter could prepare a sentence urging immediate departure, Trinette re-appeared, and Madame Marguerite sprang to meet her in almost convulsive joy at seeing the white silky hair of her favourite shining on her arm. Seizing upon the animal, covering it with caresses, and folding it to her bosom, she scarcely observed that its body felt bloated and its limbs stretched out and stiff. She had no time to enquire further; and it was not till she and the marquess, with Renault Claassen and his other attendants, had fairly quitted the castle, and arrived within the Spanish lines, that she discovered that her beloved pet existed but in effigy, and that she now possessed of it but the skin, hastily stuffed with wool! The cook, in the dearth of even dog's flesh for the garrison, could not in conscience suffer poor Fanchon to escape, while Christian men and women drooped for want of still less natural food. Trinette could no longer resist her lover's designs on the poor animal, and Madame Marguerite's confusion on the marquess's proposal, offered an opportunity not to be lost for completing the catastrophe.

And even here we may despatch the subject of this sacrifice, by saying that Madame Marguerite quickly became reconciled to it. The stuffed figure was soon as much matter of interest as the living dog had been. It was no real sympathy that had endeared the animal to her. A selfish inanity had created a want. A lap-dog was as usual for a grown infant as a doll for a growing one. The mere force of habit attached her to the *thing*, with which no *idea* was connected. It ceased to live; but it was still there in all its external reality, and the pleasure was as great as ever. Are attachments to *pets* in general, however amiable, a whit more intellectual than

Madame Marguerite's. That they were to the full as selfish in her days, let one instance suffice. During the blockade of Paris by Henry IV., in the year 1590, the Duchess of Montpensier (sister of the Guises, and the great heroine of the league,) was offered golden chains and rings to the value of two thousand crowns for her dog. She refused, saying, "She would reserve it for her own eating, when her private store of provisions was consumed."

CHAPTER VII.

No sooner had the Marquess of Assembourg communicated to Trovaldo and De Roulemonde the circumstances of his embassy, and set out for Brussels (escorting Madame Marguerite with a guard of honour), to lay the defiance of De Bassenvelt at the archdukes' feet, than the most furious hostility of the besiegers was renewed against the devoted castle of Welbasch. Neither Trovaldo nor Lyderic had looked for a different result from the summons for surrender. The spirit of the garrison and its commander was now too well proved to give a hope of their submission to aught but the uttermost necessity. In the frequent councils of war, held in the besieging camp, it had been proposed by some of the older and calmer officers, to wait the sure effects of famine, and spare the bloody sacrifice of an assault. But the fierceness of Trovaldo's nature and the malignity of Lyderic's, both stimulated by the influence of what is commonly called the *tender* passion, urged them to oppose all temporising measures, and to push to extremity the most violent means afforded by united bravery and science. While, therefore, the general in chief gave his whole attention to breaching the walls, in which his perseverance was, as has been told, successful; his second in command, directing his efforts to the recovery of the village, had, with the aid of Scipio Spinelli, now the chief engineer, and by the labours of some hundreds of colliers, brought by force from the neighbouring districts of Liege and Luxembourg, followed up, night and day, a series of mining operations, which Lyderic's local

knowledge directed to the most vulnerable parts of the castle.

Against this combination was opposed all that skill and courage could effect. Defences the most approved by the rules of art were, under the instructions of the most scientific of the officers, thrown up behind the gaping ruins of the breach, at which the whole mass of peasantry, men and women, who had been driven into the castle, worked with untiring perseverance. The approaches of the miners were undertaken to be met by Count Ivon's peculiar care. Well informed as was Lyderic in the general localities of the vaults, and knowing as he did De Bassenvelt's character, there was yet a depth of ingenuity in the first, and of resolution in the latter, that he was still to learn. For the bold race of chieftains by whom the fortress had been raised had successively laboured to its perfection, by a series of excavations in the inmost heart of the rock on which it stood, forming ready made countermines of most intricate combination, suited to meet that last emergency at some time to be looked for, but the period for which had never till now arrived. The secret of these deep recesses had ever been confined to the sole keeping of the living heir of Welbasch, like that of the hidden treasures of the harem in the breast of the reigning sultan. Count Ivon, an infant at the time of his father's exile, was of course unable to become the depositary of this trust, and he had often lamented this ignorance of it in his conversations with Lyderic. That he had now, however, acquired the secret, was certain ; by what means shall be seen hereafter. And now, on the eve of the inevitable day of doom, he transported into these vaults, which extended from tower to tower under the whole line of assault, the remaining store of gunpowder, insufficient to permit the common service of the castle artillery for another week, but enough to ensure the certainty of a terrible revenge, and a general destruction of the assailants in the very moment of their most triumphant pride. The work was done in profound silence ; the train laid, and after all was complete, De Bassenvelt, in the darkness and solitude of those vaults, and of his own deep energy, used to listen alone to the works of his enemies above his head, and the voice of the base Lyderic urging the labourers on ; and thrill with an-

anticipated vengeance on his country's foes, to be bought at the price of his own utter ruin.

But the terrible excitement of such reflections did not disturb the stillness of the passion which, like the very work of solemn darkness he had just done, lay in his heart's deep chambers, influencing the whole combination of motives and feelings that worked so actively above. His love for Theresa was the source that fed every evident spring of thought. It was *it* which endued him with such versatile powers, which made him shine at the social board, glow in the fight, or burn (like a gem in earth's deep cavities) with an intenser ray, in the mystery of his solitary reveries. Any passion of such strength, pervading a mind of high order, endows the possessor with an influence over those around him, unsought on his part, irresistible on theirs, but insensibly stamping his superiority and their subserviency. In De Bassenvelt it was omnipotent love, before which the pride of Ambition, the pomp of Power, the sternness of Religion, the stoicism of Philosophy have all bent and bowed, and will for ever while man exists in form and mind such as ineffable Wisdom made him. The effects of this passion on De Bassenvelt, and all who came within its influence, have been traced in the progress of our tale; and it may be well supposed that the object from which it arose was first in his thoughts, in the fateful hours that were now heavily rolling on.

For *her* safety, he had prepared, as he hoped, every means that human prudence could in such circumstances afford. Those means were placed under the special direction of Beatrice, whose masculine powers of mind, devotion to his purposes, and attachment to Theresa, ensured a union of courage and tenderness to uphold her in whatever perils might betide. The Moriscoe, too, was instructed to act in strict support of his sister and her charge, keeping up the link of communication between them and De Bassenvelt, until the moment when the duty that bound him to his castle walls being finally absolved by their destruction, he could wholly take on himself the care of Theresa, in the bold project of escape which he had with admirable skill arranged. All his powers of mind and body were in active play during the remainder of the day, after the Marquess of Assembourg's departure. Every being

was at his post, and the night at length closed heavily on the solemn preparations for the morrow.

But Trovaldo and Lyderic meant to anticipate the dawn. Laying aside their mutual jealousy and dislike, they had co-operated actively to the attainment of the great end now at hand ; Trovaldo, in frank ferocity, avowing the whole extent of his designs, but Lyderic breathing no hint of the diabolical consummation which he meant should wait on his. Midnight sounded its solemn peal from the great clock of the castle, and at the signal, the troops of the besieging army, destined for the first assault, moved from their muster ground, and crossed, in serried files, the bridge of boats which had been constructed some days previously, a short way below the village. At the same instant, Lyderic, with Spinelli, passed the river in a boat higher up, and prepared to take their preconcerted post in the mine, which was intended to explode under the ramparts that extended from the breach close by the north bastion to the Wizard's Tower, at the southern extremity of the fortress. The veteran Spaniards of the regiment of Valdez, and the Italians of the old regiment of Lombardy, both distinguished in most of the bloody sieges of those wars, led on the storming party, themselves headed by a small band of volunteers, chiefly composed of young men of family, and commanded by one of high promise, Vincent Bencio, fated to finish his short career that night, with many others of his gallant comrades. The German auxiliaries of Fronsberg, Alva's old regiment, called the Grenadiers of the Holy League, and the Walloon legion, at all times fighting too well against their country's efforts for freedom, were the next in order of march ; and all moved slowly and silently on, covered by a night of pitchy darkness.

They soon came to the foot of the ragged mound of rubbish which formed the base of the breach, and which had fallen, under the irresistible battering of thirty pieces of cannon, in masses that came almost close to the river's edge, and nearly touched on the ruins of the village. With cautious steps and groping hands the pioneers endeavoured to trace a path upwards over the crumbling obstructions ; and the leading column of arquebusiers opened out in a line of twelve abreast, and began steadily to mount. But the quick ears of the garrison heard the approaching sounds. A single musket shot from the advanced sentinel gave the alarm ; and in an instant

the whole scene was in a blaze of various light. Every falconet and culverin previously brought to bear upon the breach was at once discharged, and the deep volley was accompanied by a burst of fireworks, that illuminated the river, the castle, and even the distant camp, with a many-coloured radiance.

The storming party, thus exposed to the well aimed discharges of musketry and cannon, now mounted with more rapid steps. Brave bosoms throbbed higher as the danger was more evident; and any shrinking heart that wavered in the previous gloom now recovered its tone, as the dread of shame grew stronger than that of death. The dropping bodies of the killed and maimed added to the obstructions of the ascent, and were soon passed over or spurned aside, with as much indifference as the blocks of stone that encumbered the way; and the blood, lying in pools or mixing with the pulverised masonry, splashed as the column moved forward, or formed a mortar slippery to the firmest feet.

Trovaldo, cased in complete steel, and mounted on his war horse, took his station at the end of the bridge nearest the camp, surrounded by his staff, and encouraging by the most inspiring words the soldiers as they defiled past him to the breach.

"The beggars* are well prepared," cried he, as the first burst of artillery opened on his troops. "But they hold out a light to their own ruin. On, my brave friends! Such of ye as outlive this glorious night shall be loaded with honour and reward—those who die shall awake to-morrow in heaven. His holiness, the pope, has sent us a general pardon for all sins!"

Again he cried, as he saw the gallant band of volunteers bounding lightly forward and springing across the shivered fragments of the wall,—

"Glorious fellows, by St. Jago! Up, up to your knees in blood! To their heretic throats, in the name of the holy saints! Bravo, Bencio! Well done, Quinones! Now Arrighetto! Caravantes! Paceco! Brave hearts all!"

But these exclamations of involuntary praise and pious adjuration never reached the ears of the fine youths thus called over, as it were, from the muster roll of Fate. For one after

* The epithet *gueux* continued at this period to be given indiscriminately to all who opposed the Spanish tyranny.

another they fell, under the storm of shot poured from the defences above, ere they could cut a single throat for the sake of glory or religion. As Trovaldo marked them and many others struck down dead, or desperately wounded, and still rushing forward in the frenzy of their courage, bursts of convulsive laughter and phrases of wild excitement told how the fight inflamed him to temporary madness.

"Well jumped, by heaven!" shouted he, as one poor fellow bounded up in the death-pang from a bullet piercing his brain.

"Music, music for the dancers!" he cried again, as the clang of the swords and armour of those come to close quarters with the castle troops beat fierce time to the distorted motions of many who writhed with pain.

As the assailants in great numbers gained the utmost height of the breach they were met by resistance in every possible shape. Musketry, pikes, and swords, were aided by showers of stones, hurled by the women from behind the palisades, and these amazons used with great effect a missile well known in the wars of the time. This was a strong hoop of wood, studded inside with nails, and thickly covered with grenades and other preparations of fire works, which being flung among the groups as they scrambled up the breach, frequently caught some victims either singly or linked two or three together, and in all cases inflicted horrible burns and other wounds. Scalding water, too, was dashed in the faces of the foe; and the hardy peasants, unused to the regular weapons of war, rushed to the fight with pitchforks, scythes, and even flails, and dealt out their blows with deadly yet ludicrous effect.

The scene in all its details highly excited the desperate rivalry of Trovaldo; and the soldiers, as they pushed forward themselves to share these very horrors, sent forth yells and laughs in chorus with their chieftain, denaturalised by his example, and seeming more demons than men. The work had gone on for a full hour since, all preliminary impediments being cleared, the storming party had first made its footing in the breach. A dreadful carnage among them was as yet the only result. In addition to such instances of death as already related, we might almost borrow the quaint conceits of an old Italian writer in describing a similar scene:—"It was frightful to see the state of the dying in the combat that still went on.

The cannon tore away their heads, legs, and arms ; and their members fiercely scattered round wounded the comrades by their side, who fell, as one might say, by the very hands of their friends. Others being cut across by the chain-shot, still fought as it were, with one half of their bodies, and, in a manner surviving themselves, bravely revenged the other half which they had lost."

The bravery of even the bravest began to flag, under the horror that surrounded them on all sides. A general stagnation took place in the living tide that had hitherto rushed upward. No man turned his back ; but many, in hopeless exhaustion, stood still, to be shot at with a full front to the foe ; others sank down and looked sternly at the storm of missiles that came hissing on ; and some, bearing up the still palpitating bodies of the comrades who fell beside them, made a fleshy rampart under which to repose, till the order for retreat or a new impulse to attack might reach them.

Trovaldo's practised eye quickly perceived the hesitation, and his bold heart bounded to the remedy. He felt that not a moment was to be lost. Already two officers approached him, despatched by the colonels of the leading regiments to recommend a retreat. He heard the rising murmur breathed deeply through the ranks around him. Almost bursting with grief and anger, he cried at the utmost pitch of his voice,—

"Oh, infamy ! Back to those coward colonels, and tell them at their peril to repeat their words.—On, Germans ! Forward, Walloons !—Spain and Italy turned recreant—Valdez and old Lombardy forget their ancient fame, and dare not drive a few famished rebels from yon ruin. Hurtado ! Ortiz ! Alvarada ! give me my buckler and my lance—I will be among them—on, on to the charge ! My blood shall redden the pale faces of these poltroons."

With these words he clapped spurs to his horse, and was dashing into the midst of the soldiers who thronged the bridge, when two of the aides-de-camp, whom he had just named, seized his bridle at each side and forcibly held him back.

"In the name of the whole army, of their highnesses, of the holy saints, forbear to expose your life, on which all of us depend !" exclaimed one of the officers ; and the nearest soldiers pressed round, joining loud prayers that Don Juan

would run no risk, and calling out to their officers to lead them on to the breach.

"No, no, by heaven!" cried he, "it shall never be said that Juan de Trovaldo hung back, while cowards hesitated or brave men asked to be led on. Make way! Forward to the charge!"

And he again drove his knightly spurs up to their rowels in the horse's flanks, and turning aside from the crowded bridge, he forced him into the river. The noble animal, by successive plunges and some swimming, soon gained the opposite bank; the mass of the soldiers the while moving along the bridge, and shouting like savages rushing on their prey. Trovaldo now flung himself from his horse, drew his long rapier, ran his arm through the leathern thongs of a round, spiked shield, such as were sometimes carried by officers as lately as those days, and snatching a standard of green silk, which bore a cross embroidered in gold, and the celebrated motto,

"In hoc signo vici Turcas; in hoc vincam Hereticos,"

he waved it high over his head, and rapidly ascended the breach. The impulse given by his conduct was irresistible. The wavering and the daring followed it alike. National distinctions were lost in the general rush; and in as short a space as could by possibility suffice, Trovaldo, supported by his troops, had cleared the first palisade, driven back its defenders, and placed the standard of Spain on one of its highest points.

At the earliest moment of alarm, Count Ivon was standing alone and in darkness, at the low-arched entrance of the undermost vault. He once more distinguished the voices of Lyderic and Spinelli as they entered the mine above; and he caught enough of their conversation to know that it was not intended to be finally sprung, until Trovaldo's assault against the breach had been tried, and, as he thought them to say, until it had *failed*. He did not pause to catch more of what sounded so like treachery to their chief. He had heard sufficient to satisfy him that *his* time for action was not come; but warned by the hollow echoings of the cannonade that the attack was begun, he cautiously threaded the upward windings, feeling the particular notches in the wall which served to guide the initiated in their secret ways. He was soon in the castle courts, calmly directing the various means of defence,

and seeing that they were not pushed too far to interfere with his final plans.

The early resistance to the storming already described had cost the defenders but little. Fighting under cover, and with every advantage, but few men were killed. When, however, Trovaldo's desperate assault so far succeeded, the case was different. The assailants bore down all before them, and slaughtered indiscriminately soldiers and peasants, men and women. Don Diego Leonis, who had commanded the defence, was severely wounded, and borne away much against his will, exclaiming loudly that "from that moment the troops of the tyrants had gained the breach, his feet had not once touched the ground, but trod solely on the bodies of the enemies who fell by his single hand." The Scotch captain, now promoted to the rank of major by Count Ivon, subject to confirmation by Prince Maurice and the States General of Holland, took the command; but despite his steady courage and keen sense of duty, his troops gradually gave way, and as they fell back, step by step, loud murmurs broke from them, and a general cry was sent out for De Bassenvelt, as if he alone could stem the tide that was bearing them down.

And at the call, as if conjured up by magic, De Bassenvelt was suddenly on the spot, followed by the rallying bands that had first given way, and accompanied by an appearance which raised their courage and confidence to the most fanatic height. For the many straining eyes that gazed on the scene, saw nothing less than the embodied figure of that portrait of René the Wizard, with which all were so familiar, his helmet and armour glistening bright as his cloak flew aside, a white wand waving in one hand, a rapier wielded in the other, and fury, which to the beholders seemed much more than mortal, darting from his eyes.

The effect of this apparition was not more inspiring to the superstition of the garrison troops than it was appalling to that of the enemy's. Strange rumours of the "Wizard Count" had early penetrated into the besieging camp, and Count Ivon's present alliance with his ancestor's ghost was as little doubted by his terrified foes as it was thoroughly believed by his own followers. Nothing was more usual at the time than to ascribe any action out of the common run of events to supernatural aid. It was not merely Martin Delrio, so often quoted by

Father Jerome and his like, that maintained the doctrine, but grave historians as well.* To such spectators then as now battled together on the breach of Welbasch Castle the effects of the appearance we have described may be imagined; nor did the desperate blows dealt by a well nerved arm raise a question among them as to the spectral agency by which they were wrought. The wild shouts of the garrison, proclaiming the presence of their awful ally, and joining together the names of Ivon and René in stunning sounds, produced in their just then victorious enemies a panic almost inconceivable in rational men. They, whom neither blade nor bullet could appal or turn from the path of duty, now showed their backs, and all shamefully fled. Even Trovaldo slowly measured back his steps, retreating, but still disdaining to turn; and even, though his hair stood erect from fright, parrying the thrusts and warding off the blows aimed at him by an arm which he would not believe to be human. The first line of defence was again recovered, the breach cleared of the assailants, and the Spanish colours torn from their place and trampled under foot. But as the discomfited besiegers retired, they were not followed by the garrison. De Bassenvelt's strict commands restrained them within the line of the palisades; and when the runaways ventured to look up again from the foot of the breach, they saw no enemy save the terrific representant of Count René the wizard, fitfully revealed by the flashing blazes of the cannon, and standing at the top in an attitude of victorious pride.

Crest-fallen and disheartened, Trovaldo stood at the foot of the breach, unable to stop the flight of his soldiers, who now rushed impetuously towards the camp, their present disorder forming a wild contrast to their late compact array. While he stood, leaning on his rapier and listlessly stroking his beard, an officer of engineers, despatched by Lyderic, approached him, and announced that every thing was now ready for springing the mine, and requesting his presence on the spot.

"The mine!" exclaimed he, starting and looking round, "true, by my saint! I had forgotten it quite, in the bloody

* Strada ascribes to the actual assistance of demons the celerity with which the Iconoclasts of Antwerp destroyed the images and ornaments of the celebrated cathedral of that town in 1566, as well as the destruction of the bridge at the subsequent siege of that city; and he concurs in Delrio's account of the apparition of Pierre de Paz's ghost hereafter alluded to by Trovaldo.]

business yonder. And is it come to this? Driven from the open breach by some phantom of hell, and forced at last to underground cunning, like gnomes or coal-diggers! Well, be it so! Let's to this mine! I remember when the heretics and their legion of fiends blew up the great bridge at Antwerp with their fire-ships, Alexander of Parma, my glorious commander, was forced to confess that one miner was worth ten soldiers. Come on, then, to this mine of Baron Roulemonde's — the glory is after all reserved for him and Spinelli — if, indeed, the devil that fights for these rebels be not too strong for all their brimstone. Come on, Hurtado!"

He then followed the engineer with his only remaining aide-de-camp, Ortiz having been just killed, and Alvarada desperately wounded by his side. Several other officers accompanied the general, while others, recovering from their panic, by degrees succeeded in rallying their scattered regiments, and forming them in readiness for whatever might be resolved on as soon as the mine exploded.

Lyderic, who had anxiously watched the results of the assault, was rejoiced at all that had taken place. When he saw Trovaldo rushing into the dangers of the breach, he fervently hoped that he could not escape the death he seemed to court. Had he fallen there, Lyderic's first object had been gained without the necessity of a crime. Had that been the success of the assault, he would then have ordered the mine to be sprung, and so created a terrible diversion in favour of the storming party; for he was sure that the result of the explosion must be the ruin of the whole line of rampart under which the excavations extended; and a consequent exposure to attack which the garrison could not possibly resist. But Trovaldo's triumph was the last of his wishes. He therefore watched and waited, in anxious observation of the event, and when he saw that the general and his successful troops were in their turn repulsed, he smiled for joy. He still hoped that some random shot or stroke would lay Trovaldo low, and raise himself to the supreme command. But when he found that he had escaped the death which so many around him met, he then, as on a former occasion in the case of De Bassenvelt, endeavoured to satisfy himself that fate had doomed his victim to the particular mode of destruction he had prepared for him.

"Well, Baron Roulemonde, I am here at your summons.

Since fair fighting has no chance, we must try foul. Faugh! what a filthy stench comes from this damnable place! This is not like the genuine smell of powder — and these black-faced fellows? Are they soldiers? They look as though they wore masks in very shame of their dark doings. But never mind! What is now to be done?"

Such were Trovaldo's words on entering the mouth of the deep cavity through which Spinelli's scientific operations were approached.

"Don Juan, I am glad to see you here," said Lyderic: "your presence is necessary to sanction our works."

"Go on, go on, Baron Roulemonde — take your own course. I am as nothing now. I cannot cope with demons or magicians — they require other opponents than a plain soldier and a sharp sword. Do as you like in this extremity."

"Come, general, this tone of sarcasm and despondency is not fitting the occasion. We must try all means against the foe, nor believe them aught than mere mortals like ourselves. I am grieved to see you quail before a contemptible trick. I know De Bassenvelt well — and I scorn this masquerade of magic, which some one of his trained creatures has so well acted. Our soldiers must be disabused, and led again to the breach. At the same moment with their next attack, we will here fire the train, and at one crash lay open a wide way into the very heart of the castle, which must then infallibly be ours. Cheer up, Don Juan! Send out orders for a fresh assault — you see the troops are rallying — and then just enter here with me and Spinelli, and approve the means which you will see to be irresistible."

"I understand not these doings, although I have fought within mines ere now — witness the memorable attack of Maestricht, where Fabio Farnese, Mondragon, and myself battled two hours in the underground works, as though in our very graves. But I have no skill to judge these things. They are your and Spinelli's doing — let the merit be between ye!"

"What will you do then, Don Juan? Will you again put yourself at the head of the troops, and lead to the assault?"

"I'll fight no more — I feel my spirit weighed down. It was not, by heavens, a mortal murmur that drove me back just now, and withered me with those looks! No, no, it was a ghost, as sure as that of my old comrade Pierre de Paz,

which fought for two hours on the dyke of Covensteyn, six months after I saw him killed at Tenermonde. Take all upon yourself — issue what orders you like — you have my authority for whatever you deem it well to do.”

“Quick, then, to the leaders of your columns!” cried Lyderic to the several officers near him; “let the trumpets sound a charge — let them advance once more! Once lodged within the breach, the mine shall be instantly sprung, and then a general rush into the wide chasm, and all must be ours!”

A loud flourish of trumpets awoke again the courage of the troops. The officers, taking their cue from Lyderic, soon spread the belief that it was a mere man who had acted the part of the wizard spectre; and the soldiers, burning with mingled shame and rage, advanced to the breach, with loud oaths of vengeance against every mortal within the castle walls. Then Lyderic exclaimed,—

“Let the miners now withdraw, and every man stand to his arms, beyond the covered galleries. No harm can come to any, if each takes the post assigned him. Steadiness and regularity ensure the safety of all.”

The whole body of workmen now withdrew by the different passages — Lyderic’s words of command and caution were whispered along the lines, as they were silently formed in imagined security. An awful pause took place without the mine. Within it, a brief scene of treachery and violence was acted.

“Now, Don Juan, all is ready,” said Lyderic, “the troops march bravely to the assault — the workmen and pioneers are in their places — we are all prepared for the final moment. And now you will not, you must not, refuse to look on the admirable arrangements within. Our good Spinelli here would be in despair were all to be blown in air, without your eye bearing witness to works on which his future reputation is to rest.”

“Surely, my noble general, you will not refuse me the favour of inspecting for an instant the labours to which I was stimulated by the hope of your approval, and on which the whole prospects of my career depend,” chimed in the Italian.

“Nay, worthy Signor Spinelli, if your mine does its work,

and blows these ramparts to atoms, it carries its own certificate of good conduct, and your warrant of promotion."

"But my pride, my glory, is in my general's approbation."

"Spinelli, you know full well how I abhor these secret works. So did Alexander of Parma, my master and model in all that I know or wish to know of war. Tambelli, Toralli, Barochio, and all the rest of your engineers, never stood in his favour so high as a simple pikeman. Nor do you in mine, worthy Spinelli—but I will not refuse a glance at your works, since your heart seems so set on it. Whither must I go, in these dark windings?"

"This way, my gracious general; your courteous words gladden my heart," said the engineer, cringing low, and holding up his lantern, which was constructed so as to give light without danger.

"Steady, Spinelli! Remember Vitelli!" muttered Lyderic, in the sepulchral voice of treachery and death. At this signal, previously agreed on, the engineer closed his lantern and pretended to stumble.

"How now!" exclaimed Trovaldo, stopping short, as he found himself in utter darkness, "let's leave this loathsome place! Back, back, I say! Who presses me on?"

"Now, now, Spinelli! down with him!" cried Lyderic; and before their victim could utter another exclamation, the conspirators shoved him from the narrow passage into one of the cavities which they had destined for his tomb; and they in an instant shut the ponderous cover which was ready at their hand for the occasion.

"Quick, quick to the mouth of the mine!" mutually exclaimed the murderers; and as they gained the outlet, while the Italian re-opened his lantern, Lyderic seized the match that lay at his hand, and prepared to light it. But he was anticipated in the intended consummation of his desperate deed. While he was in the very act of placing the match to catch the spark of light, Spinelli holding the lantern towards him, and both trembling in the terror of their half accomplished crime, a crash as if heaven and earth had met together—a shock as though the world was rent asunder—deprived them at once of sense and motion, and flung them amidst a mass of overwhelming ruin.

No sooner had Trovaldo been repulsed from his lodgment

in the defences of the breach, than Count Ivon began to put into execution his measures for the evacuation of the castle. The principal body of his mounted soldiers, who had not been engaged in the conflict, were all in readiness to file out through the eastern portal. The peasants of both sexes, who had so well done their duty during the assault, were placed on foot in the centre of the dragoons. A few carts were also stationed there, loaded with awful burdens of women and wounded men. The hostage Provost of Flanders, who had quite recovered from his barbarous treatment at the hands of the picaroons, was also in this station of greatest safety, together with Father Jerome, Nona, Trinette, and various other members of the household. The baggage attempted to be carried away was little or nothing. Some of the family records, under the care of Paul Cuyper, formed the entire property belonging to De Bassenvelt. In resolving to fire with his own hand the train that was to destroy his last remnant of earthly possessions, no alloy of petty avarice mixed with his heroism; nor would he encumber the chances of safety to the beings in his care, by any selfish efforts in which he alone was to benefit. He resolved to start with them in this desperate venture in a perfect equality of ruin. His horse and his arms formed his whole personal stock.

Theresa and Beatrice had been together during the whole of the preceding evening, and throughout this perilous night. The vigilance of De Bassenvelt was not to be deceived; and though the assault was only promised for the morrow, he resolved that every thing should be ready for it come when it might, for he felt thoroughly the just maxim of war, "that it is better to be beaten than surprised." Beatrice had therefore, by Count Ivon's desire, prepared Theresa for the intended evacuation of the castle; but to avoid any premature alarm or unnecessary shock, he had strictly prohibited her speaking of the desperate and wholesale measure of revenge on which he had resolved. It was part of the plan of tactics which he had adopted towards Theresa that she should hear from himself alone the full extent of his destitution, for he had a fierce pride in the intention of revealing himself to her, and claiming her for his own, at the very moment when he had but himself to offer to her; and he had fixed with Beatrice and her brother the point for his meeting them on their

simultaneous escape from the abandoned walls. Theresa was soon equipped in a riding suit constructed by the united ingenuity of Nona and herself ; Beatrice in her male habit of grey kersey, but disencumbered of the plates of armour in which she was wont to appear in the sorties and skirmishes which had taken place during the siege. The horses meant for the service of the two friends were ready at the point from which their departure was to take place. This was a small postern gate which opened upon the moat under the castle's northern side, and from which a narrow causeway communicated with the eastern portal whence the main body of the garrison was to escape. At the little postern in question the Moriscoe was stationed, attended by a stout dragoon in charge of the horses, while he, in pursuance of previous arrangement, passed continually between this post and De Bassenvelt's varied stations in the castle, to keep the communication clear, and receive his final signal for departure.

The Moriscoe came also frequently to his sister with the intelligence of what was going on ; but Theresa involuntarily shrunk away from his approach. She could not overcome her repugnance to him. She remembered his yet unexplained share in the circumstances which had betrayed her into De Bassenvelt's power, and she could only regard him, notwithstanding his various feats of courage, as the deceiver of Lambert Boonen, and the ready instrument of his formidable rival, to whose service he had so deeply devoted himself. Delicacy had all along prevented her from expressing this dislike to Beatrice. She had strictly avoided the mention of her brother's name ; and now, at this final moment, she would have sunk under the apprehension of his sinister protection, had not her reliance on Lambert Boonen's promised co-operation with young Claassen upheld her, with all the vague but potent agency of hope. And in spite of the increasing horrors of her situation, she felt a buoyant presentiment of good, a foretaste of love and liberty, that rose like the refreshing breeze which precedes a storm.

In this mood she witnessed almost the entire of those fierce events which have been faintly described. Familiar now with scenes and sounds of battle, she could not resist the impulse that prompted her to gaze on their continual recurrence ; and no sooner had the outburst of brilliancy illumined the horrors

of the assault, than she hurried to a station overlooking the whole, which she viewed with the breathless interest of a witness, while Beatrice, by her side, sympathised in it with all the intenseness of an actor. But there was a motive stronger than curiosity, or the mere force of habit, which urged on Theresa on these occasions, and fixed her eyes on scenes which made her heart sicken. That was the undefinable delight of witnessing the constant exertion of De Bassenvelt's prowess, which had been almost daily displayed. And she was always sure to know where danger and glory were the nearest, by the waving of his peculiar plume, which she had long learned to consider as the symbol of both. And now in this most desperate of all the scenes she had witnessed, throbbing and panting with the fluctuation of the fight, like a vessel that warps and bends with every heave of the waves on which it is tossed, she again saw Count Ivon's jet black plume, as he rushed to the breach. She gazed, too, with speechless wonder on the well recognised figure of René the Wizard. She saw Trovaldo and his troops driven back ingloriously; then, by a strange discrepancy of feelings, not incompatible with the best regulated minds, her strongest emotion was one of mixed regret and shame, that Lambert Boonen was not a partaker in the scene, his total absence from which had been, a few moments before, her most fervent hope. Then a wild mixture of fears for his safety — suspicions of the Moriscoe — doubts of De Bassenvelt — uncertainty even as to Beatrice — rushed upon her.

"Now, now, Theresa!" exclaimed the latter, "the moment is at length arrived. I see Count Ivon has commanded the retreat. The main body of the troops begin to move. The crisis of escape is at hand. Here comes my brother to lead us to the north postern. Come, my dear friend — we have no time to lose."

Theresa felt her lips parched, as she strove to reply. She could not utter a word; but mechanically moved on with Beatrice, following the Moriscoe, who led the way, by the great stair, and through the vaulted corridors that stretched along by the kitchens, then into a subterranean way that passed under a small court-yard, communicated with some of the rampart galleries, and finally opened out at the little postern before mentioned. These various passages were partially lighted by torches stuck at intervals in the walls. The way

was smooth, and the air came freely in, from loopholes and casements cut in the gallery. They had nearly completed the route ere Theresa recovered the power of speech ; but at length she suddenly stopped, and grasped forcibly the hand of Beatrice, who walked close before her. She sat down on one of the benches cut in the rock, for the occasional repose of the musketeers by whom the line of galleries was so often occupied.

“ Stop, Beatrice,” said she, in a decisive tone ; “ we go too fast. I must still be assured of the only condition on which my life is worth preserving. Where is Master Boonen ? I have his sacred promise to be with me at the moment of escape. It is come — but he is not here ! You know all that affects him — that urges him to keep his word — that disables him from doing so. Where is he — why is he not here ? ”

“ Good heavens, Theresa, is it at a moment like this you stop for such vain questions ? On, on to the postern ! your friend will meet you there — be assured — be satisfied — all will be well ! ”

“ Oh, Beatrice, I cannot till I see him. My heart sinks within me — may I trust you ? ”

“ Can you doubt me ? Poor girl, what a fine web of suspense and suffering is spun round thee ! would I might at once snap it — but the moment is at hand — come on, come on ! ”

Theresa was re-assured more by the tone of sincerity than the words just uttered. There was, too, an air of compassion (which always implies authority) in Beatrice’s manner that produced its momentary effect. She took her proffered hand, rose from her seat, and walked on ; and as they proceeded she heard the rushing sounds of the crowd that quitted the castle walls, and the tramping of the horses’ feet in the court-yard above. In a little more, the chilly air through the opened postern broke on her face, and she saw by the light thrown out from the nearest torch, the dark waters of the moat spangled by a reflection of a few stars, and the thick crop of weeds and rushes waving in the breeze. As she followed Beatrice out of the arched aperture, she saw the horses standing ready caparisoned. Another quick glance showed the soldier-attendant, whom she was prepared to expect, and the Moriscoe, who held forth his hand as if to assist her to mount.

But she vainly sought him for whom alone her eyes were open, for whose presence her heart bounded.

"Beatrice," said she, "he is not here!"

"Dearest Theresa, let thy doubts be tranquillised. I swear to thee that all is right. Mount thy horse, and let us join the rest—I hear them defiling from the portal yonder."

"Come, lady," said the Moriscoe, "you endanger your own safety, and the happiness of all most dear to you by delay. To horse, to horse!"

With these words he stepped forward, and Theresa's fears told her he meant to seize and force her away. The effect of fear that shows a positive danger is to add force to a strong mind, in the same proportion as that which is vague unnerves it. Theresa, convinced that she was on the point of being irretrievably torn from her lover, if she did not exert her utmost energy, stepped back into the postern, and exclaimed to Beatrice, who implored her to depart,—

"Never! never will I stir from these walls till I see Lambert Boonen in safety. *He* is the dearest object to me on earth. I will not abandon him. If all were fair and right he would be here. But if he be basely left to the enemy's power, I will share his fate—I return to the castle!"

"Theresa, Theresa!" cried Beatrice, following her quickened pace, and catching her gently by the arm, "you know not the destruction you are courting.—Oh, come, come to liberty and happiness! I swear to you once more your lover will meet you by and by—will snatch you from these doubts and terrors—come, come!"

"Beatrice, I am resolved! I have no confidence but in him—this is a moment too perilous to stand on points of courtesy I must see him, or I stir not!"

"Oh, heavens! what a scene of child's play is this for two women to act, at a time when heroes might tremble and turn pale! What can I do? Why may I not act for myself? How persuade her to her own safety and happiness?"

Beatrice uttered these words with a startling veracity of tone. She seemed overwhelmed with agitation.

"Yes," exclaimed she again, after a pause of fixed thought, "that will do—there may yet be time—come this way, then, Theresa! Follow me fast and firmly—you *shall* be satisfied—you shall see your lover—he shall accompany you. Quick,

quick, to the Wizard's Tower ! And now, Alla ! now, holy Prophet ! to ye and the destiny taught me by your sacred creed I commit myself."

Beatrice, seizing a torch from the wall, led on, Theresa rapidly following, urged forward by an impulse of uncalculating delight. Her heart throbbed as she hurried on, and she seemed to herself scarcely to touch the earth. She saw that the whole line of corridors, kitchens, and stairs, by which they passed, were quite deserted. But the figure of Lambert Boonen seemed every where visible, and the whole scene was populous with imagined multiplications of him.

They at length reached the great lobby, and entered by the main folding-doors the memorable picture gallery. In spite of her excitement, Theresa felt a shudder at the memory of her last visit there. With half-closed eyes, looking neither to right or left, she followed Beatrice's steps. When they had reached nearly the further end of the gallery the latter stopped suddenly at the foot of the little stair leading to the tower.

"Now, Theresa," said she, "I leave you for a moment to tell him you wait. He shall be with you presently, to lead you away. You shall not have three minutes' more suspense. But think not of me—ask no questions—call not for light—he knows the path—time flies ; I will be at the postern as soon as you."

With these hastily spoken words she sprang up the winding stair, and Theresa found herself in instant and utter darkness. The sounds of the cannon had entirely ceased. There was not a whisper to be heard. The sudden silence and darkness, and the forms of hideous phantasy that at once seemed crowding on her, caused a terror too great to bear. She rushed up the winding stair, and seemed to catch new life as the gleam of the torch appeared from an open door above. In an instant more she gained the turn that gave a full view of the little chamber within, and she nearly sank from a new pang of joy, on seeing the object of all her anxiety in the act of hasty equipment. The well known beaver hat placed on the head, the oft observed camlet cloak clasped round the throat, the twisted handled rapier, caught up suddenly for instant departure, were tokens sufficient for Theresa. At once brought to a sense of courage and shame, she turned quickly, and re-

traced her steps to the bottom of the stair, shocked even then by an instinct of mingled modesty and pride, at being detected by Lambert Boonen in a movement that could only have sprung from indelicate intrusion, or degrading fear.

Lightened of a load of dread, she reached the gallery, and she turned back to catch the sound of her lover's foot, or the sight of his form, descending to join her in the flight which now had no terrors for her. As she looked and listened, a horrid sound broke on her, accompanied by a burst of lurid and almost blinding light. The windows of the gallery were shivered to atoms, and the solid frames dashed inwards. The walls and floor reeled and quivered. A quick succession of noises, resembling the first, but not so terribly fierce, and boundings of the whole building, as if some huge animal shook it with gigantic force, filled the next few seconds. Theresa felt an intolerable sickness and agony; sense seemed annihilated, yet instinct impelled her towards the wide gap where the window had been; and her eyeballs seemed to crack as she saw the tower close by totter and roll from side to side, and then fall in a thousand fragments. Through a wide rent of the riven wall she saw the form that embodied all her soul's devotion, with out-stretched arms, sinking and catching for safety at the very fragments of ruin that came dashing down; and while she thus stood gazing in the full consciousness of her agony, a cloud of sulphureous vapour steamed up, and would have suffocated her had not the first instinct of life driven her away. She turned and fled, lighted by the rapid flashes that poured into the gallery with a new succession of explosions; and as she ran along, the floor undulated and the walls heaved, and the huge portraits shook and rattled, like forest branches in a storm gust.

Theresa, rushing forward, by no motion of the will, but in mechanical obedience to the great law of nature, which commands self-preservation, retraced the way she had so lately traversed. She never stopped till she was at the farthest end of the subterranean passages, and almost close to the little postern gate. The first return of sensation was from fresh terror at seeing the Moriscoe, with wild and haggard looks, rushing in and coming towards her. She shrank into a nook, and he passed without seeing her. A brother's fears had sent his looks straight forward, and made them dull to the observ-

ance of aught but the dear loved sister whom he ran to seek. When he passed, as a vollied steam of smoke poured along the gallery, Theresa sprang away again, and in an instant more she sank, in an agony worse than death, on the little causeway that stretched from the postern across the moat.

Here she became wide awake to the vivid sense of what had in the moment of action appeared a hideous dream ; the whole of the terrible scene was again before her, and she screamed in hysteric terror. Through the heavy smoke that rolled upwards, broad flashes of light were at every moment thrown from blazing rafters and the combustibles flung forth in the conflagration. Successive reports from single pieces of artillery, self-discharged as the fire came on them, sounded like signal guns from the engulfed and sinking fortress. The horrid sounds of pain, fear, and death, sent out from hundreds of victims, defy the pen and the imagination both.

Theresa distinctly saw the soldier who had been left with the horses, scrambling from the moat, into which he had either fallen or been cast by the concussion, while the terrified animals plunged in the water or galloped furiously along the sloping bank. In the distance was the whole body of the fugitive garrison hurrying rapidly from the outer defences of the place, and last of all, urging on the rest by gestures of persuasion and command, and occasionally throwing his head backwards, as if gazing on the frightful desolation he fled from, Theresa distinguished the figure of De Bassenvelt, his horse Rolando bounding and plunging under him, as if impatient to bear him from the horrid scene. This view of De Bassenvelt, who *now* had no rival to dread, brought with it that first thought, and then a paroxysm of woe. Theresa turned her head away, and again she screamed unconsciously, and it was only an innate dignity of spirit that saved her from the extravagant gestures and exclamations that weak and vulgar natures find relief in at such moments. She neither tore her hair nor beat her breast, but she sat on the cold earth, grasping it with convulsive snatchings, and gazing with complete despair as if into a mirror that reflected the whole depth of her misery.

While she thus sat, statue-like, but in the clearest possession of intellect, she saw two figures hurrying towards her, in the opposite direction to that from which she had turned.

She immediately knew them to be Renault Claassen and Jans Broeklaer. Their approach caused her no emotion whatever, nor did she attempt to move or speak. Claassen ran rapidly across the narrow causeway and stooped down close to her. He was pale and trembling. His first words were uttered almost breathlessly.

"Heaven be praised, she is safe! But he — where is he? Why is not Master Boonen here?"

A low, yet piercing scream was his only answer. "Oh, heavens! What does that sound of woe betoken?" exclaimed he; "where, oh where is he?"

"Beneath yonder ruins!" uttered Theresa, in a tone of fixed anguish that made the compassionate youth shudder; but he did not want a due power of exertion in a case of extremity. The feeling that bore him through the perils he had just surmounted to the appointed place of meeting, to labour for her safety, gave him now the faculty of decision. He promptly desired Broeklaer, who obeyed in speechless terror, to seize one of the nearest horses, which was the one prepared for Theresa. Then advancing close to her, he raised her from the ground, with a steadiness and strength that amazed him; for ever till that moment the very thought of touching the hem of her garment with his finger's point used to throw him into a tremor.

"You will intrust yourself to my care — you will fly with me from the horrors of this place?" said Renault, in the accent that is sure to find its way to the hearer's confidence. Theresa rose up, assentingly, but she did not, she *could* not speak.

"Let me implore you to mount this horse," continued he, "there is yet a moment's chance of escape — *but* a moment, for if De Roulemonde survives, or De Bassenvelt seeks you, either way you are lost."

At the mention of each of those names, Theresa thrilled with dread.

"I give myself wholly to your care," said she, "you are now my best, my only friend!"

These words were followed by another of those convulsive, imperfect screams, which few may have heard in real agony, but which those have shuddered at and *must* remember, who have seen, in parts of impassioned anguish, the one exquisite

actress whom Ireland had the pride of giving to the stage and still possesses in private life. At the same instant, Theresa grasped young Claassen's hand, with a truth of wretchedness that forgot the cold forms of decorum, and, if it had remembered, would have scorned them.

In a few minutes the fugitives had passed the causeway, and Theresa's bridle being held at each side by her devoted attendants, they led her to the leftward, down towards the river's edge. Claassen knew his path well, or he could not have kept it safely in the thick darkness of the smoke that rolled from the ruined castle, making darker the depth of shade under which they wound along.

Scarcely had they set out and turned their backs upon the scene, when a horseman came along the raised chaussée above the moat at full speed. It was De Bassenvelt. Had there been any beholders they might have marked under his open casque a face of terrible anxiety; but his looks were only met by the stillness of desolation. He galloped across the causeway, threw himself from his horse, approached the postern, through which a dense volume of smoke rolled out, and he loudly called on Beatrice and the Moriscoe, and the deep echoes of the gallery answered hollowly to the sounds. He then examined the earth for traces of those he sought, and while he discovered from the deep hoof-marks that the horses had there struck their feet in violent and sudden movement, he caught a view of the soldier, labouring at some distance down to recover his charger, which still plunged through the entanglement of the weeds.

Count Ivon sprung into his saddle, and approaching the soldier, immediately recognised him as the Moriscoe's companion.

"Speak at once, quickly, truly!" cried De Bassenvelt. "Where are the others — where the lady — what has become of them — of her?"

"Most noble colonel!" exclaimed the still affrighted Walloon, "it must be the devil that has played us this trick! it was the arch-fiend himself in the form of the Wizard Count."

"Villain!" cried the furious De Bassenvelt, raising his sword, "do you dare to mock me? Where is the lady? Answer, or ——"

"Why, colonel! Count Ivon! What the fiend would you do? Don't you remember me — Bastan?"

"God, must I endure this agony! — Wretch! — Good fellow! Bastan! Yes, I know you, well, very well — for God's love tell me where is the lady?"

"Colonel, I scarcely know where I am myself — I tumbled into the moat, and scrambled out again — how, Heaven can tell — but I can't. And this unlucky beast, you see ——"

De Bassenvelt caught the pummel of his saddle with both hands, and groaned from mental torture.

"Well may you groan, my colonel, for, if I judge aright, that hell-burst has not left one stone of the castle standing on another. Saint Jacob! What a crash it was!"

"Bastan!" cried De Bassenvelt, in a tone of desperation, "take this rapier and plunge it into my throat!"

"The saints forbid!" said the soldier, stepping back, crossing himself, and putting his hands behind his back.

"You are giving me a worse death, Bastan! If you would not drive me mad, tell me what has become of the lady, of Beatrice, of the Moriscoe?"

"May I die, colonel, if I well know — my brain is confused — but I saw them, one after another, run back through the postern gate."

"Gracious Heavens!" murmured Count Ivon.

"And soon afterwards, just as the earthquake tossed us all about, me and the horses, and flung some of us into the mud, which it was hard work to get clear of, just then, or it might be before or after — for my head is reeling yet — I saw the lady rush out again alone, and throw herself on the earth yonder."

"Ha! where?" cried De Bassenvelt, ready to dart away.

"Why, close by the little postern — but hold, colonel, you need not start off there again, for she is gone clear away!"

"Gone! Go on, go on! tell me all, in Heaven's name!"

"I know no more to tell you, count, but that I saw two men lift the lady on a horse, and lead her away."

De Bassenvelt grasped his throat, as if to make a clear passage for the almost suffocating rush of joy. He could not utter a word — but he *felt* a deep prayer in his very heart.

"Which way are they gone, good Bastan?" were his next words.

"Nay, that I know not, colonel——"

"And I care not!" said Count Ivon. "She is safe, she is safe! Up, Bastan, and away! We must follow them——down the lane of maples, and across the little birch wood——that must be their path——keep close to me!"

As De Bassenvelt gave the reins to Rolando, and the soldier pushed on his horse up the jagged banks of the chaussée, a straggling discharge of musquetry broke on them to the right.

"Hark!" said De Bassenvelt, "our fine fellows are forcing the enemy's line of blockade!"—And in the next instant, Gallagher, close followed by a dragoon, galloped up, calling loudly on Count Ivon.

"Colonel, colonel! Count Ivon! Hold, stop, for the love of Christ, don't run away! In spite of their fright at the blowing up, the enemy are opposing our passage!"

"Run away!" echoed De Bassenvelt—a rush of angry valour even at that moment mantling to his brow, and superseding every other passion. "List to me, Gallagher! Theresa is before us, on this very path——pursue with these two men, and lead her back——bring her to me—I shall halt at the windmill till you join me——and let it be safe and soon!"

"And Beatrice, colonel?"

"Ask me not—I dread to know the truth of her!" Ivon turned his horse's head and galloped back in the direction of the firing, while Gallagher and the two soldiers pursued their way down the lane, with the best speed they might venture to put forth in its pitchy darkness.

CHAPTER VIII.

LYDERIC DE ROULEMONDE, with better fortune than many a better man, escaped totally unhurt from the catastrophe which had hurled so many of his fellow-soldiers to destruc-

tion, inflicted horrid wounds on others, deprived some of sight, some of hearing, and caused to almost all within its reach sufferings from the contemplation of which the mind recoils. De Bassenvelt's calculation was tremendously accurate. The rocky basement of the ancient pile was upturned to its very heart. The Wizard's Tower at one extremity, and the Turk's Head bastion at the other, with the whole intervening space of rampart, were utterly destroyed, and the huge body of building in some parts rent open, in all shaken, cracked, and prepared for the ruin which the desolating blasts of a few winters completed, but whose records still live in the moss-covered and weather-stained fragments that mark its site.

The loss of the enemy was immense. The choicest of the besieging troops, and almost all the chief officers who had crowded to the breach, or peopled the mines, were included in the shock. Death came among them in an appalling variety of shapes. Some were at once consumed by fire; some smothered, while their bodies remained whole; others forced high into the air, scattered into atoms, or dashed to pieces by rugged masses of stone. Here wretches were buried alive in earthen graves, and there crushed by a weight of monumental rock. The escapes were in many instances miraculous. Not a few were swept upwards, and whirled to great distances, like chaff before the wind, falling safely on the ground, or in the river. Many more stood stunned in their places, but unmoved and uninjured in the very midst of the fierce tempest; and some were held harmless, by projecting blocks, shaken from their old positions into others of safe refuge for those to whom they seemed to threaten instant destruction. Among these latter was Lyderic. Though stunned and stupified for a while, yet he recovered himself one of the first, and he crawled from his position at what had been the entrance of the mine, to gaze on a chaos and a Golgotha combined.

As soon as returning perception allowed him to gather the reality of what had happened, and to comprehend his own safety, a gnawing solicitude arose to ascertain that Trovaldo and Spinelli — his victim and his accomplice — were both destroyed. Of this he was soon satisfied. A crushed and scarcely recognisable corpse lay close to his foot — but the blaze of the burning castle enabled the keen eye of villany to see that it was that of the wily engineer, who had so readily

joined in his crime, and was already gone to meet its reward. A few paces distant the granite bosom of the mine, bared to its greatest depth, showed him the particular spot chosen for Trovaldo's tomb, split and shivered to pieces, and untenanted but by some fragments of dress and decorations, that hung here and there on the scattered remains of limbs and flesh which had so lately formed the person of the bold but remorseless Don Juan. A chain of gold, bearing the medallion of the Golden Gleece, hung to parts of a shattered cuirass. Lyderic seized it, and threw it round his own neck; and his hard heart, even then, throbbed with a pleased movement against the bauble of dignity which seemed a token of his coming greatness.

When he felt that he might safely emerge from the place, and that the clouds of smoke and dust in some measure cleared away, he stepped forth, but stopped suddenly, transfixed by the sight of the desolation around him. The huge walls, and towers, and battlements, laid low; heaps of unshapely rubbish, where the regular and high-wrought labours of architecture had but a moment before so proudly stood; space, vagueness, and exposure, at once superseding the visible forms of power and strength—all this combination of material sublimity struck even Lyderic with immediate awe. But he was totally dead to the moral grandeur of the spectacle, which would have raised a purer mind above the sphere of mere human wonder. Lyderic's first and most natural feeling was joy at his own safety. What came next we have told. But the wide ocean of associations which the scene opened out were to his selfishness as the broad sea to the speck of peopled machinery that floats on it.

A cold egotist like Lyderic, even in such a moment as this, is sure to display what should be called absence of soul, rather than its common term, presence of mind. Selfishness is of all agencies that which soonest lifts a man above the sympathies of his kind; but degrades while it elevates, like a bad deed raising a tyrant above the laws. The screams and groans, the prayers and imprecations, that rose on all sides, the horrid forms of death and suffering, produced but little effect on Lyderic. He stalked on through all with a keen calculation of the advantages which must arise to him; and while his gaze seemed all abroad, it was turned in to the very depths of his own interest.

A generous mind at such a time would have forgotten every thing but what was dictated by the first impulse of humanity. A hero would have hurried to relieve the sufferers. Lyderic prepared to profit by the calamity.

He was now chief of the remnant of what was a few weeks before a high spirited and well appointed army. Its present force he did not attempt to estimate, but he saw that, be that what it might, the object of all its labours was accomplished, and the fulfilment of his hopes facilitated if not complete. Welbasch Castle was destroyed ; Trovaldo was no more. But De Bassenvelt, Theresa, Beatrice ? were *all* his objects within his reach ? Forcing his way through every obstruction, he strove to collect whatever force might be available. He passed by the dead and the disabled soldiers, but rallied all who, like himself, stood sound and whole. A trumpeter was among the earliest of those ; and he blew loudly the call to arms, which rung in the ears of many an astounded and expiring wretch, like the summons at which they were to rise incorruptible. Answering sounds of ralliment soon pealed from one end to the other of the scene. Blackened, scorched, and otherwise disfigured beings, scrambled along, from all sides, in the mechanical efforts of discipline, or urged by a gregarious impulse of security, which, in the hour of danger, brings man close to man. A short period sufficed to unite some hundreds in a tolerably compact body, armed and unarmed, but ready for their leader's bidding.

Lyderic placed himself at their head, addressed a few encouraging words, and, without damping their faintly reviving courage by the announcement of Trovaldo's death, he led them on towards the remaining skeleton of the fortress. Unopposed by any but passive difficulties, they continued their way, and soon surmounted the ruined battlements, and stood in the midst of the late populous court-yards. Not a being was to be seen ; but before they could give expression to their conjectures upon this solitude, the distant shots and sounds of conflict told them that the garrison had abandoned the place, and were still fighting their way to freedom.

Lyderic's feelings were of a mixed kind at this conviction. He was rejoiced to escape a personal encounter with De Bassenvelt, whom he feared still more than hated. He hoped that some chance shot might even then rid him of him for ever. Next came a pang of disappointment, at the dread that

Theresa had escaped—and then the strongest of all, in the certainty that Beatrice was lost to him. He would at that moment have given up all on earth for her possession, for his passion for her was the most powerful and the least vile his sordid nature had ever known.

With the insufficient force around him, scarcely recovered from their fright, and in the midst of darkness, he dared not attempt to pursue the fugitives. He could only secure his possession of the ruined fortress, till daylight might enable him to collect the cavalry of the army from their surrounding cantonments. Agitated by the mingled success and failure of his hopes, he moved through the desolate scene, gradually concentrating his troops for their dreary bivouac, and issuing orders for the earliest appearance of morning. While he ranged about, under pretence of seeking Trovaldo's body, baffled in attempts to recognise various parts of the castle, whose locality he had known so well, and avoiding the tottering walls, which were each moment falling and changing the aspects of every point of the ruin, he came at length to the little enclosed garden, which had been appropriated to the use of Theresa and Madame Marguerite, and which was so lately overlooked by the window of the Wizard's Tower.

The place was now more than half filled with the fragments of that fallen stronghold of superstition, and, as was believed, of guilt; and Lyderic was turning away, followed by the group of officers and soldiers who composed his hastily formed guard, when one of them exclaimed that he saw the body of a man amidst the beams of the floor that hung, partly suspended, and partly supporting portions of the walls, which had not yet settled into the final stillness of ruin. Lyderic heard this exclamation with a start of rapture. Could it be De Bassenvelt's body? It must be one of the castle's inhabitants, for none of the besiegers could have there met his death. Why not De Bassenvelt's?—So argued Lyderic's wishes, not his reason, as he strode across in the direction pointed to by the soldier; and with his sword half drawn, he was ready to plunge it into the body, and make assurance doubly sure.

Pushing aside those who stooped to the examination, Lyderic fixed his eyes on the object of scrutiny. One glance was sufficient to convince him it was not De Bassenvelt. The height was as nearly as possible the same, but the form was

slighter. The imperfect bursts of light, throbbing as it were through the smoke and gloom, were not sufficient to reveal minutely the dress of the person thus discovered. A couple of the soldiers lifted the body up from beside a heavy beam, which had at once wounded and preserved it from being crushed by the falling roof. The sudden motion turned the face upwards. A stream of blood flowed over the pallid forehead and cheeks. The eyes were closed, the mouth compressed, as though pain had not relaxed into death, and a feeble groan confirmed these symptoms of life. But it brought to Lyderic a still more thrilling conviction — it was Beatrice who lay before him !

The most callous heart in existence has, let us hope, its vulnerable point of tenderness. Had Lyderic de Roulemonde never known Beatrice, he might have been for ever a mere villain, without one redeeming trait. But her influence brought him within the pale of sympathy, for it caused him to suffer. As he now beheld her, he endured an excess of anguish such as he had never before known or imagined. He snatched the senseless body from those who held it, clasped it in his arms, and hurried by whatever way he could from the ruins, loudly commanding all those around him to order all the surgeons of the camp to assemble at his tent, which was, in virtue of his station, that so lately occupied by the ill fated Trovaldo. He scarcely paused till he arrived there, and he placed his burden on the couch of her former tyrant. The surgeons soon came, and profusely applied their united skill to the poor patient. Nature assisted the consultation, and in a short time Beatrice was on the point of recovering her bewildered senses ; and pronounced out of all danger from her hurts, except such as might arise from the fever to be expected. Repose was then prescribed as the best remedy — the surgeons withdrew — and Lyderic alone watched by the side of the couch.

The broad gleam of the risen sun came into the tent as Beatrice awoke to a thorough sense of her situation. Partial snatches of recovery had flitted across her mind for a full hour before. But the positive return of reason was long in gaining the ascendant ; and the reality of her fate came with it in frightful evidence. The first objects that caught her glance, and then threw it back like a chill weight upon her heart, were portions of dress and accoutrements which she

recognised too acutely as belonging to Trovaldo. The couch, too, on which she lay was not to be mistaken. She knew it well — and odious associations came with the recollection. How she came there, and all the previous circumstances of her fate, were absorbed in the first thrill of terror, at knowing she *was* there. She kept her eyes voluntarily closed, expecting every moment that Trovaldo's hated form would stand before her.

Lyderic, satisfied that Beatrice was out of danger and at his mercy, soon recovered his self-command; and while he sat watching at her side he found leisure to pen, but with a hand trembling with excitement which unnerves the firmest, a hurried despatch to the archdukes, announcing the destruction of the castle, Trovaldo's death, and the other military events of the night, and leaving no room for an inference that the success was not wholly to be attributed to him. He mentioned the escape of the garrison, as a desperate resource of a mere handful of remaining rebels, and stated it as doubtful whether De Bassenvelt had not himself perished. A private note to Zaputa, told him that no tidings had yet been heard of the Provost of Flanders, or of Theresa, implored his interest for Lyderic's immediate appointment to the government of Bruges, with full power over the ex-burgomaster, whom he claimed as his prisoner, and concluded with an assurance that the promised share in the gold-beater's immense wealth should not at least be lessened in consequence of this exercise of ministerial influence. These, with a notification of his immediate return to Brussels with the remains of the army, completed the contents of his despatches; and after he had committed them to the hands of the officers who waited in the outer compartment of the tent, he cast a cautious glance at Beatrice, and saw that her looks met his.

Beatrice, whose recovering faculties had been wholly filled with the image of Trovaldo, felt instant relief, when the whispered sound of Lyderic's voice caught her ears, and a throb of pleasure filled her breast as her eyes involuntarily opened, and perceived him bending over her couch. But this was the feeling of a moment. A sense of loathing rushed upon her, as she recollected that Trovaldo's dreaded presence was replaced by De Bassenvelt's base betrayer, the instigator of his intended murder, and he who, at the moment of the

Moriscoe's memorable escape from the Spanish camp, had, with cool blood-thirstiness, ordered the paralysed soldiers to rouse from their surprise, and fire. Her feelings suffered an instant revulsion, but Lyderic saw it not; for her closed eyelids, and half open lips, gave no evidence of the bitterness of her scorn.

"Beatrice!" murmured he, sinking on one knee beside the couch — "you know me — that passing glance says that you do, and that my presence is not hateful to you. Oh, speak to me — say that I do not deceive myself — let the first words of awakening sense tell me, that fate has not thrown you into my hands in vain — that I have not triumphed over all enemies, and gained my heart's dearest wish, but to sink under the withering blight of your indifference! Speak, oh, speak to me!"

These words completed Beatrice's return to sense, and her rising contempt calmed the agitation which hatred would have fermented into anger. A keen perception of her actual situation came across her, and she resolved to avail herself of Lyderic's present mood, to gain information of others dearer to her than herself.

"I do know you, Baron de Roulemonde," said she, again opening her eyes, "but ere a word is spoken between us of mere personal import, answer me, has Count Ivon escaped?"

"Count Ivon?" echoed Lyderic with a start, that proved how harshly the name grated on his ear. "Have you no thought but for him?"

"Yes, for my brother, for Theresa — where are they? Are they, too, in your power?"

"Would that they were!" replied Lyderic, clenching his hands, and biting his lip, while a scowl brought his brows down close to his unspeaking eyes. A murmur of half uttered thanksgiving was Beatrice's only retort, while Lyderic, recovering himself, went on.

"No, Beatrice, you alone are in my power! Yet I only wish to use it for our mutual happiness — of the others and their fate I am ignorant, and while you are thus within my reach, they are as nought to me — but now ——"

"And Don Juan?"

"He exists no more. The explosion which destroyed the castle left me the chief of a victorious army, and oh! better

than the world's sovereignty, it threw you, Beatrice, into these arms, scarcely harmed, saved, as I myself, by miracle, and proving that destiny meant you to be mine."

"Alla is great and good! Be my destiny fulfilled!" murmured Beatrice, in fervent prayer, not meant for mortal hearing. But Lyderic caught the words, and in the mental blindness of passion he saw not their real import, but applied them to his own purposes.

"You consent then, Beatrice — wonderful creature that you are! above your sex in every personal attribute, and above ours in the mind's strongest faculties, you will not wage a vain war with fate. You own at length what I too deeply felt the first hour I saw you — that nature meant us for each other! You will now, beloved Beatrice, in this hour of my triumph, consummate my long cherished hopes, give victory its real value, and crown my deep passion with its just reward! Beatrice!"

As he murmured these last words, and, still on one knee beside the couch, attempted to pass his arms round its pale and languid but beautiful tenant, the touch of his trembling hands, and the breath from his quivering lips that came warmly upon her cheek, darted electrically through her, and at once congealed each soft emotion, and condensed the whole energy of her spirit into scorn. She shrunk for an instant back — then quickly raised herself on one arm, and with the other pushed aside the raven tresses that hung disordered on her face and neck — and then, looking sternly on Lyderic, she spoke, —

"Baron Roulemonde, I have heard you out, with a calmness which God has given me, to compensate for the heavy anguish I am doomed to suffer. My mind is clear and bright in this dreadful hour. Listen to the words it inspires. You call on me to submit to fate, to fulfil my destiny, to admit your passion — to return it. Like all believers in the creed I follow, I bow implicitly to the fixed will of Heaven, but like all who know the scope and worth of reason, I never was nor will be an inert mass of matter, to be moulded at the will of any who wears a mortal form, but to whom my mind acknowledges nor fealty nor fellowship. There did — Heaven grant there *does* — live one with whom the viewless links of sympathy bound me, heart and soul — but you are not he!

one, for whom fate meant me — not as the sensual agent of mere passion — not for the degrading purposes you contemplate — but as the pure partner of his noble mind, from which no blow but death's alone can sever me."

"Beatrice, hear me!" said Lyderic, in accents more deeply impassioned than before. "I cannot listen to nor look on thee. The influence of that detested one is on thy very brow — it engenders a demon in my breast, which glowed and melted erewhile with tenderness that seraphs might have breathed in. Beware how you force the growth of this foul fiend! I love thee now — even *now*, while thine eyes dart lightning and thy lip curls with scorn. A moment more may be too late — my very heart's blood may change into gall if it be forced into unnatural heat. Turn, then, thy looks away — close those silent yet too eloquent lips — let my arms encircle thee and my heart throb against thine! Let the ardour of my love consume this forced disdain!"

"Thy love! Thy love!" uttered Beatrice, looking still more fully and almost fiercely on him. "Polluted and profaned for ever be the holy passion if thou darest touch the threshold of its temple! Away from me! Begone! Ay, start and rise up, wretch, odious wretch as thou art! De Bassenvelt's influence on my brow! Ay, in my inmost soul, that loathes thee like a reptile it cannot condescend to hate. De Bassenvelt! How durst thou breathe a thought of him, and not be consumed! I have felt thy warm breath like the sulphur-flame of hell upon my cheek — thy finger's touch has thrilled through me, more chilling than Azrael the Death Angel's grasp. — Thy love! Miscreant! Let my scorn wither thy heart into ashes!"

Fevered, yet exhausted, Beatrice sunk back on the couch, while Lyderic, having risen as she spoke, in the first impulse of his rage, seized his sword from the table by his side, pulled it from the scabbard and drew back his arm, about to plunge it into her breast. She saw the movement as she sank back, and unable to utter her defiance, she only threw open her arms as if to court the blow.

"No!" said Lyderic, in a hollow tone, as though his voice came from the depths of some cavern, and at the same time he quietly sheathed the weapon: — "no! thou shalt have no mercy! By the saints, thou shalt be well paid back

thy scorn! Mark me, Beatrice — for thy half convulsed lid and lip betray thy consciousness — thy words, thy looks, have changed me, as though the marrow and blood of manhood were turned at once to stone. I feel that my cheek is colourless — that my lips are livid — that my eye is glazed. My heart is withered, and the ashes shall be strewn upon thy path! You *scorn* me! Good! I feel the spell — but the enchantress shall perish with her victim's pride! You have degraded me — I feel, I acknowledge it. — You might have raised me above mortality — you have frozen me into a very fiend. In the solemn agony of my self-contempt I avow all this — and now for my revenge!”

Having uttered these words in a voice half suffocated by rage, he raised the curtain that divided the tent, and advancing to the outer opening, he beckoned an attendant officer.

“Summon hither on the instant,” said he, “Dom Lupo and his attendants. A Moriscoe maiden, in the guise of manhood, a relapsed, an avowed follower of Mahmoud, a fugitive from her convent, awaits her doom at the mercy of our holy mother church, into whose hands I resign her.”

The bigoted though brave veteran who received this order threw up his hands and eyes in pious horror, bowed his head, and signed on his bucklered breast the form of the cross, whose memory should teach mercy that might melt through plates of steel; and he hastened to seek Dom Lupo de Lucerdo the inquisitor, who, with two familiars, attended the royal army, like the foul birds that hovered on its track, in instinctive readiness to seize on and devour their prey. Lyderic turned into the inner portion of the tent. He had no remorse as he gazed on his victim, lying silent and resigned to the horrors which the name of the inquisitor announced for her. He stood looking on her as placidly as though he neither loved nor hated her. Yet it was hatred in its deadliest nature that completed the prompt transition.

Very soon did Dom Lupo de Lucerdo, a Dominican friar, commissary of the Inquisition, and deputy of Don Alonzo del Canto, the hoary head of the unholy tribunal in the Low Countries, make his appearance in Lyderic's tent. He was accompanied by the two lay brothers of his order, who acted by turns as familiars, witnesses, or executioners. One of them bore the banner of the Inquisition, to which all bowed

down as it passed : a black velvet field, on which was embroidered a cross in green satin, with an olive branch worked on one side, a naked sword on the left, and the motto, *Esurge Domine et Judicæ causam tuam*.^{*} Dom Lupo was not one of those imbecile brothers who obtained admission under the title of Inquisitor of the Faith, avowedly because they were deficient in *reason*, whose ignorance gave rise to the well-known proverbial question and answer, —

Qu. Que cosa es Inquisicion ?

Ans. Un santo christos, dos candeleros, y tres majaderos.†

He was a learned monster, who prostituted powerful talents to the worst purposes, being never known to swerve from the hard and narrow path of bigotry. He was still a young man, being one of the few exceptions to the rule of the Inquisition, which prescribes forty as the minimum of its officers' age, to lessen the chances of feeling exercising its sway in their breasts. But in the present instance the precaution might be safely dispensed with, for nature had given Dom Lupo as hard a heart as though time had been half a century employed in its petrification.

He entered the tent, and, totally unmoved at sight of the pale, exhausted, and beautiful creature who lay before him, he approached the couch to which Lyderic pointed, and uttered in his official twang the horrid summons which had made many a bosom thrill.

“ Deliver yourself up a prisoner to the Inquisition ! ”

At the same instant one of the familiars, prepared to act as secretary, seated himself, and produced writing materials ; while the other mumbled some jargon, of confiscation or sequestration against goods, chattels, and properties, which the poor culprit never had, and, as they were fully resolved, never should live to possess. The inquisitor then commenced to recite the usual oath to speak the truth, and the questions which constitute the “ interlocutory investigation,” but no answer was returned. He repeated his leading interrogatory in a louder voice, and followed it up by a declaration, that if the

^{*} This motto is copied from an original edict of the Inquisition. It contains three errors, the original text being, “ *Exurge Deus, Judica causam tuam*.” *Psalms* lxxiii. ver. 22.

† *Qu.* What constitutes an Inquisition ?

Ans. One crucifix, two candlesticks, and three blockheads — alluding to the number of judges, and the objects required at their sittings.

accused persevered in obstinate silence, he would proceed by *denunciation* instead of *judicial inquest*, as he had leniently intended ; and in lieu of acting on the *edict of grace*, under which a prisoner is mercifully allowed to be his own accuser, he would be forced to have recourse to the forms of the *edict of faith*, which requires secret impeachment, and the consequences of which would be the many varieties of torture, which were sure to be followed by death.

Lyderic grew cold with horror as these fearful words were uttered ; but it was now too late to encourage feelings of remorse or dread, nor dare he dream of rescuing her whom he had denounced : he might as well have hoped to snatch a victim from the jaws of a hungry tiger. He stood in an attitude of rigid attention, his knees trembling, his teeth chattering, and his eyes fixed on Beatrice's face.

After some minutes, which the working of her features pronounced to be spent in some deep mental struggle, she opened her eyes, and looked fixedly on the inquisitor and his creatures, and said in a feeble, but not a faltering voice,—

“ Ministers of vengeance, I have heard your words, and I look upon ye undismayed. I know my fate, and am ready to meet it. I understand too the impious jargon of your calling. You shall be robbed of half your anticipated delight. I *do* accuse myself of heresy, and avow my hatred to the blasphemous doctrines of your sect. There is but one God, and Mahommed is his prophet !—No secret wretch is wanting to denounce me — and yonder base being shall be at least spared that atrocious crime. I thus avoid the torture — and I court the death which you must award me.

“ Yet think not it is from craven fear of bodily pain ! No ! The torture that could not dismay Maria Borhorques — the anguish that was bravely borne by Leonora Vibero, and a thousand other victims—I might well sustain. But I would not give a triumph to your hellish tribunal, beyond the mere death-pangs which I know I am doomed to suffer. I scorn your pity—I defy your power ; and I would die a thousand deaths sooner than invoke your justice, for that would be the merest mockery of all. Yet I know that *did* Justice dare to rise up against your tyranny, every hair of my head were safe ; for the laws of Spain expressly recognise the capitulation of Grenada, when Ferdinand and Isabella granted freedom of

worship and security against forced conversions to all the Moriscoe race. But why do I speak of this? might I not as well speak to stones? Away with me then—I am yours! and may God and his prophet uphold me in the fulfilment of my doom!”

The inquisitor calmly listened to this speech, while the secretary took down the words. Nothing was said in reply until the record was entered into the real book of doom. Then Dom Lupo muttered some set form of words; and advancing to Beatrice who had once more sunk down on the couch, he placed his hand on her shoulder, which had been disembarassed of the close doublet by the surgeon's directions, and with a sentence of unholy invocation he took possession of her, in the name of the Inquisition, and in right of the sacred mystery, whose name we must not (following his example) blasphemously invoke.

As Beatrice felt the pressure of the inquisitor's hand upon her, the blood seemed to curdle round her heart, and every nerve felt cramped. In a moment more she was enveloped in a dark cloth mantle, carried from the tent, and placed in a black covered litter or waggon which awaited outside. A guard of attendants, in the habits of the holy office, walked beside. The inquisitor mounted his horse, which was caparisoned in the trappings peculiar to his office. Lyderic saw the whole pass before his eyes, as if it were the solemn pageantry of death. He gazed for a while on the curtains that covered in the rude carriage. He marked the procession pass away. But as the door of the tent was closed again he made no effort to move or speak. Turning his eyes involuntarily towards a small mirror that stood on a table, he darted back electrically on seeing a smile upon his features.

“Ha!” exclaimed he, “I did not think myself such a villain! But—but—has she not *scorned* me? Is not De Bassenvelt the object of her love, and am not I the object of her *loathing*?”

CHAPTER IX.

THE dislocation of the whole machinery of the besieging army now went rapidly on ; and we must hurry our readers along with a corresponding promptitude. A small force of cavalry was despatched by Lyderic to watch the movements of the retreating patriots, who with De Bassenvelt at their head had easily forced the line of blockade, and taken their way towards the Isle of Bommel, where Prince Maurice was supposed to be with the chief army of the States.

But all Lyderic's feelings urged him away from the scene of his various villanies, towards the theatre where he hoped to enact a part of splendid success ; while a rankling revenge against Beatrice seemed to call for the consummation of her doom, and to promise in it an oblivion of his baseness.

" In advance ! To Brussels ! " were therefore the brief commands, loudly passed on from regiment to regiment, and echoed in all the various departments of the quickly decomposed encampment.

The inquisitor and his gloomy train formed one of the most important appendages to the head-quarters in Lyderic's advance ; and the total want of prisoners, for its completion as a military spectacle, seemed amply recompensed in the bigoted feelings of the times by the poor trophy of one desolate woman. The cart which conveyed Beatrice — fevered, exhausted, and miserable — was viewed by the soldiery, and the population that gazed on their march, with a triumphant veneration equal to that inspired by the holy ark in the movements of the armies of Israel.

It was almost nightfall on the second day of the march, when a halt was ordered close under the walls of the ancient monastery of St. Benedict, not far from the little town of Wavre on the banks of the Dyle, into which route the head-quarters and the chief officers of the army had struck off from the high road leading from Namur to Brussels, in pursuance of a vow of thanksgiving, to be offered up at the shrine of our Lady of Peace by the survivors, in case of the success of their expedition against Welbasch Castle.

During the approach to this celebrated spot, Dom Lupo, riding beside the litter or cart which contained his captive, had not ceased to pour into her ears a strain of oppressive lecturing upon its merits and history.

In spite of her efforts to repel this, the numbing buzz of the inquisitor's voice sounded in her brain, and his words floated there in mazy circles. Images connected with his discourse rose before her. In the peaceful valley, where the grey twilight showed her the evidence of nature's culture, she could not help imagining the arid desert where a brawling torrent had struggled through rocks and briars, till (accompanied by miraculous lights and heavenly music in honour of the Virgin) all obstructions were invisibly cleared away, and the chapel erected on the neighbouring hill was removed by angels' hands into the valley, close by the spot where the monastery was soon after built. Then the gaunt figure of Godfrey of the bushy beard, carrying in his brawny arms and laying on the shrine the relics brought from the Holy Land—the belt, the bodkin, and the scissors of the Virgin—which had worked such wondrous miracles for centuries past. These and a thousand phantasmal accessories danced before the bewildered Beatrice, as she lay in her litter and looked through the open curtains upon the massive walls and arched portico of the abbey; while her gloomy guards paced silently to and fro; and the mules, loosened from their traces, snatched their meal of black rye bread eked out by the scanty herbage of the road side.

The solemn pealing of the organ and the chant of the vesper service now swelled upon her ears. A mysterious dizziness of sensation seemed to envelope her. Her eyes felt heavy. Her head drooped upon her breast. An awful and undefinable dread stole upon her, which with fevered efforts she strove to rouse from, but in vain. The recollections of her late conventional duties, the solemn rites, the penances, pomps, and austerities of the religion she had forsworn, all crowded upon her now in a maze of torturing confusion. She felt herself to pant and throb for relief. The open porch of the abbey seemed to invite her, while a mysterious agency appeared to impel her towards the outspread arms of reconciliation and forgiveness in the bosom of the church. Her senses all begun to reel—she lost all power of action or of thought—and in a

maze of wonder and awe, she felt herself at once transported into the nave of the sacred building.

Beatrice gazed around in breathless agitation. The faint twilight, coming in through the lofty windows, mixed with the candles of the altar and the lamp that hung before the shrine, in a dim and drowsy light. The organ swelled, and a chorus of invisible singers joined their voices to its high sounding notes. No priest stood at the main altar, no monk bent before the shrines, no choristers filled the galleries. Beatrice stood alone in the midst of the solemn scene, between a file of marble figures of saints and warriors, surmounting a range of monuments that extended at each side of the long aisle in which she seemed rivetted. The organ ceased its notes—the voices died away—and with a simultaneous movement, every one of these carved effigies slowly raised themselves up, and showed the loathsome reality of a fleshless skull; while as each shook its fearful head in solemn time-keeping, the teeth chattered, and the bones of every skeleton figure rattled in their stony sockets. A few seconds elapsed, when the organ again swelled out, the viewless choir recommenced the strain, and each statue sunk slowly down into its own sculptured identity.

Beatrice would have fled from the torturing scene, even back to the hateful protection of her gloomy guards, but a spell seemed on her, to root her to the spot.

Again the music ceased, and again the horrid solemnity of salutation was acted by the statues. In a sickening agony she attempted to scream—and although her voice seemed stifled in her throat, it appeared to rouse the slumbering genius of the now unholy place. A figure of awful mien and terrible aspect advanced to her. The lurid light that streamed from it in every part rendered it more obscure than evident. A deep voice, that seemed not new to her, exclaimed, “Sinner, I wait for thee!” Beatrice would have uttered some exclamation for mercy, but ere she could speak, a broad hand pressed heavily on her shoulder. A horrid instinct told her whose it was. She opened her eyes with an electric shock, and the fiend-like visage of the inquisitor glowered in between the open curtains of the litter, in which the delirious sufferer had dreamed her dream of torture.

The next day witnessed the triumphant entry of Lyderic

de Roulemonde and his army into Brussels. Ere evening closed he had laid an account of his exploits at the feet of the archdukes, had been raised up from his sycophant posture of homage, invested with the order of the Fleece, assured by his grateful sovereigns of their most unbounded favour, and become at once the admiration and envy of a crowd of courtiers. At the same time Beatrice, with burning brow and boiling blood, was laid on her miserable pallet of straw, loaded with execration, and threatened with a speedy and agonised death, in the loathsome dungeons of the *Amigo*, as the inquisitorial prison was named, as if in mockery of its hapless inmates: The destruction of Welbasch Castle opened the whole line of communication between Brussels, the Meuse, and the countries of the Rhine, in which it was believed the campaign was now about to begin with renewed vigour on the part of the States of Holland; while Schenck, the life and soul of the movements on the borders of Brabant, was planning his attack on the important fortress of Nineguen, which was considered an object of paramount necessity. De Roulemonde's force, though reduced full one half of its original strength since it marched under the command of Trovaldo, was now disposable, and of considerable importance as a reinforcement to the Marquess of Berg, who, with the small yet principal army of the archdukes, held the revolted fort of Saint Andrew in check, and was prepared to act as Prince Maurice's demonstrations might require.

In this important moment both Albert and Isabella displayed great vigour and ability, labouring in the vocations of government with their wary ministers, and preparing for the approaching struggle with all the foresight which the crisis imperatively claimed. Amidst secret councils, regulations of finance, and military plans, but little heed could be given by the supreme heads of the state to the obscure details of priestly persecution. And even had more leisure been allowed, it is doubtful if the archdukes, in their proved bigotry, would have stretched the arm of power to shield from the vengeance of the church her who had abjured its doctrines and violated its rights. The doom of Beatrice was adjudged and executed with fierce rapidity.

A law of the Emperor Charles the Fifth, passed half a century before, had decreed the frightful punishment of living

burial against female heretics, and many executions of the kind had varied by their bloodless atrocity the horrid butcheries committed all through the Low Countries during the tyranny of Alva. After that period such sacrifices had been less frequent; but as late as three years before the date of our story, an instance of this barbarity had publicly taken place in Brussels, by the orders of Albert, who at that time held the highest dignity of the Christian priesthood, next to that of its supreme head. A poor servant girl named Anne Vanderhove, arrested on a charge of heresy, refused in all the pride of martyrdom to renounce her faith. She was condemned to the grave — not to the common occupancy of that cold refuge of the lifeless body, but to all the horrors of living contact and hopeless struggles with the suffocating clay. She suffered her punishment, in the midst of a crowd of curious fanatics; but such was the disgust inspired by the spectacle, that it was thought impolitic to hazard in the face of day another exhibition of the kind. Beatrice's judges, therefore, after a summary hearing, decreed that she too should be buried alive — but at night. She heard her sentence, in just sufficient exercise of reason to comprehend and shudder at it. But her mind, wandering and unsettled, had not force enough to dwell on the contemplation of what awaited her, and unconsciousness of her approaching fate gave her the semblance of indifference.

But Beatrice, with all her pride and almost unfeminine force of character, was not proof against a fate so horrible. As the hour drew nigh when she was to be led forth to execution, the blood in her throbbing veins seemed suddenly frozen, like the hot streams of lava checked in its molten flow. Her blanched cheek and starting eyeballs told that her fever was quenched, and her insensibility awakened to a full sense of her terror.

In darkness and silence the sad procession moved from the prison's most private door, on the night fixed for the execution, the third after the hapless girl's arrival in Brussels. The persons employed were few; no sympathising crowd attended to strain the victim's pride and courage, and make her for very shame's sake brave the terrific scene. Lone and desolate, she was led along by two brutal men, with taunt and execration; they, dressed in the dark habits of their office;

she, barefooted, and clothed in the yellow garment called a *san benito*, her beautiful jet locks cut close, and her disfigured head and pallid face surmounted by the conical cap in which the Inquisition decked its victims for sacrifice. Four masked men walked first in the procession, two carrying spades, and two bearing the insignia of the Holy Office. Next followed the secretary, with a book and materials for writing, ready to record the particulars of the execution. Then came Beatrice, dragged onwards by her supporters, and urged towards the closing scene by the odious voice of Dom Lupo, pouring a strain of pious blasphemies into her reluctant ears. He stepped close in her track, and leaned his head forward, determined that she should not have a moment's respite till the damp earth closed those ears for ever. A dozen armed men brought up the march; and no suspicion of the inquisitor's proceeding aroused the citizens, in the narrow and unlit streets through which it moved.

In less than half an hour, Beatrice's bruised and lacerated feet felt a sudden relief that spread up refreshingly through her whole frame, on pressing a grass-plot, moistened by the night dew. At the same moment, a gleam from a lantern opened by one of the men close to her, showed her that she stood on the brink of a newly-dug grave. She started back at the appalling sight — and was upheld from falling by her attendants, on whose faces she saw a malignant grin, while the tones of Dom Lupo's voice seemed to hiss in her ears, like the serpent triumph of a fiend.

"Erring daughter of the only true and most merciful church," gloomed he, "unrepented sinner, on the verge of death — ere the grave close over thy living agony — ere the arm of Almighty wrath shove thee into the pit of hell, and eternal flames enfold thee — listen to the last offer of the mother thou hast outraged, of the faith thou hast defiled. Recant thy errors — renounce thy false gods — confess thy crimes — and return into the blessed bosom of the church!"

Beatrice, rousing the whole force of her latent energy, pushed the inquisitor from her, with a look of scorn, burst from her keepers' arms, and sprang into the open grave.

"Lost and condemned for ever and ever — let the earth lie heavy on her head!" exclaimed the furious priest, stamping his foot with rage, and motioning to the familiars, who in-

stantly commenced to shovel the earth into the grave. Not a sound was heard but the soft rustling of the leaves over head, for this scene took place in the open ground above the Sablon, formerly mentioned as the scene of some earlier executions; and Beatrice's grave was dug at the very foot of the tree, where the Jews in 1370 had expiated their imputed sacrilege.

Not a murmur, not a movement betrayed an instant's shrinking from her fate, as the cold heap of clay covered Beatrice to the very neck. Her face was still above ground, and the infuriated bigot, whose word was to save her or stifle her voice for ever, once more approached. He knelt beside her — thrust his crucifix close to her still straining eyes — and in accents that faltered from rage, he cried out, —

“Dost thou still dare refuse? Death is on thy lips — hell gapes for thee! Wretched woman, say but one word — kiss the blessed relic, and thou art saved!”

“There is but one God, and Mahomet is his prophet!” said Beatrice, in hollow and broken accents.

“It is done! Cover her quick! Let her perish in eternal fire!” cried the inquisitor.

The executioners heaped the earth still higher — the head was covered in — and only then a smothered scream burst upwards, while the struggles of natural agony shook the mound to and fro. Still the legal and consecrated murderers went on, with trembling hands and quaking hearts. But as they hastily closed their work, a deep and heavy groan came upon the air from a not distant part of the waste ground; and the group looking round in guilty terror, saw a man close wrapped in a cloak, but struggling with another — of aged and decrepit stature — as if he would break from his hold, and rush upon their unholy labours. A weapon gleamed in his hand; and the whole group of guilt, inquisitor, familiars, and guards, struck with panic, and imagining rescue and revenge from a hundred indignant arms, hastily fled from the scene with loud cries for help.

In a moment the grave was torn open, and Beatrice, still panting in the struggle between life and death, snatched from its re-opened jaws, and about to be borne off in the close-locked arms of her brother, when the insatiate inquisitor, his ardent vengeance overcoming his fears, turned from his flight to give one assuring glance upon his victim's grave. By the

light of the lantern which streamed on the ground, he saw that, instead of the indignant crowd his apprehensions had imagined, only two men were on the spot, one of them old and diminutive, and the other encumbered with the exhumed body. In the glow of fanatic fury, he forgot all personal fears ; and, while his dastard creatures held on their terrified course, he sprang back alone to the burial ground, and seizing the old man with one hand, he stretched forth the other to grasp from the Moriscoe's hold his still insensible burden.

"Sacriligious villains !" cried he ; "give up your impious purpose, and resign the body of the recreant lost one. Let it rot in its earthy prison, till the last trumpet rouse it in resurged life to burn in eternal fire !"

A deep and silent plunge of the Moriscoe's poniard stuck the blaspheming bigot in the throat. Another blow pierced his heart, as he fell into the imperfectly hollowed grave ; and while he lay there several strokes were dealt on him by the feeble hands of the old man, with one of the spades which he tremblingly seized. And then, in the instinct of terror at the deed, he shovelled the loose earth over the bleeding carcass, while the Moriscoe's pale profile looked stern and rigid in the expiring light. The work was soon complete ; and the mound of earth thus hastily thrown up (soon covered with as rank weeds as ever sprang from a polluted soil) were long marked by shuddering superstition as "the grave of the Mahommedan girl." The fate of the inquisitor was quite unsuspected ; and he might have been still believed to have disappeared supernaturally, or perished by some less awful visitation, had not unerring records thrown light on his fate.

The tottering steps of the old man quickly led the way across the thickly-planted site of the little Sablon, and by many a winding lane and alley towards the hill of Caudenberg, till the Moriscoe, with his beloved burden, found a safe refuge in the old man's dwelling, in the narrow street on the side of the hill, not a hundred yards below the house of the Marquess of Assembourg.

We cannot now pause to detail the circumstances under which the Moriscoe, escaping destruction in the catastrophe of Welbasch Castle, had availed himself of the subsequent bustle in the royal army to follow its progress to Brussels, watching for an opportunity of snatching his sister from her threatened

fate. Neither must we enter into the particulars of his connection with Abram Hackaerts, the well known crooked Jew of Mechlin. It was, however, through the benevolent energy of that old man that he succeeded in acquiring the knowledge of the proceedings before the Inquisition in the case of Beatrice — and it was shrewdly believed that the key with which he unlocked the secrets of even that dark mystery was one of gold.

Be that as it may, he accomplished his purpose of doing good to a fellow-creature, even though the objects of his beneficence were of a belief that pointed out him and his religion as most loathsome and detested. In his house, which may still be seen, with a façade distinguished by three curiously carved heads in medallions, and supported by two Herculean Cariatides, he sheltered the Moriscoe and his sister, till the latter recovered completely, and a chance of escape presented itself for both. But leaving them for awhile, we must now turn to her who it must not be forgotten is our heroine, and pursue in the next chapter the fortunes of the bereft and miserable Theresa.

CHAPTER X.

As soon as Renault Claassen and his faithful assistant Jans Broeklaer had cleared their way through the impediments offered by the outer defences of the castle, they struck off to the leftward, through the maple grove pointed out by De Bassenvelt in his conversation with the soldier; and there, favoured by the darkness, they found it easy to conceal themselves and their passive charge from the hurried search of Gallagher and his followers. To all the loud shouts and calls which the energetic Irishman sent ringing through the little wood, he received no answer but the mimicries of echo, while the near report of the firing summoned him in his turn away, in tones too consonant to his feelings to be long resisted. The brief business of forcing the line of blockade and dispersing the

astounded enemy ere the shock of the castle's explosion had ceased to agitate them, left De Bassenvelt free to return to the scene of his deepest anxieties, while his troops moved forward in compact order of march.

As Gallagher galloped on, and while a few straggling shots told him that the affair was all but over, he had nearly come into violent concussion with a horseman, speeding away from the contest, as furiously as he rode towards it. The hope of its being a flying foe, and the chance of ever so little fighting, made him joyously rein up his horse; and at the same moment drawing his sword, he wheeled upon the dimly-seen cavalier, and called aloud on him to turn and defend himself or yield.

"Ha! Gallagher!" cried Count Ivon, checking his career, and then forcing Rolando by spur and rein to bound towards his lieutenant, "and Theresa? She is with you? Give her to my arms, and let's away!"

"Saint Denis forbid that she was with me, colonel! Do you think I'd bring a delicate creature like her into the middle of the fighting? It is not *all* over, colonel!" said Gallagher impatiently, and again turning his horse's head towards the sound of the faint firing. But De Bassenvelt, forcing Rolando still closer forward, caught his bridle and cried out furiously,—

"Traitor! Villain! What have you done? Where is she? Where is Theresa? Lead me to her this instant!"

"Colonel," said Gallagher, with a prompt expression of gravity, and in a determined tone, "these are hard words, but we have no time for explanation now. On the first occasion I shall not fail to ask your meaning. As for the lady, I can only say that they who hide may find, but it's more than I was able to do. I have left the two men to continue the search; and under your leave I will now return to my troop—but not to act the part of either villain or traitor!"

"My brave comrade, my stanch friend! pardon those hasty words—bear with me—I knew not what I said—I am wild with the fear of losing her—oh, where is she?—answer me quickly, or I shall go mad!"

De Bassenvelt accompanied these impetuous words with the offer of his hand, which the warm-hearted Irishman could not reject. He seized it in his, and exclaimed,—

"Enough, enough, Count Ivon—I am more than satisfied—and may Heaven forgive me for being angry with you for

a foolish phrase ! Didn't you before now save me and stand over my lifeless body more than once in the battle field, and is it I that should quarrel with you now, when your heart's full and your pocket empty — your beautiful young mistress gone astray, and your fine old castle destroyed ? Colonel dear, let me throw my arms round your neck if you love me ! ”

“ Not now,” said De Bassenvelt, drawing back, “ not now, my friend — think how precious time is — think of her who may be lost to me by a moment's delay ! Come, Gallagher — follow me, to find her or perish ! ”

An abrupt curvette turned Rolando's head once more in the direction of the wood ; while Gallagher, missing his intended embrace of De Bassenvelt, had nearly pitched with open arms over his horse's neck. But he recovered himself instantly, and dashed off at full speed after the almost frantic lover. In a few seconds they had gained the skirts of the grove, and they heard the voices of the two soldiers, continuing their search with loud halloos and cries of “ A Bassenvelt ! A Bassenvelt ! ” not supposing that this watchword of their band at once drove the fugitives farther away, and drew on themselves an unlooked for, and just then untoward, attack of the enemy. For some of the royalist troops who had rallied after the explosion, and forced their way through smoke and gloom along the subterranean galleries and out at the little postern, rushed on in pursuit of what they concluded to be some scattered remnant of the flying garrison, collecting to the sounds of their war cry. Full a score of Italian and Spanish lancers, burning for revenge, sprang on to the wood, while others sallied from the postern ; and when De Bassenvelt and Gallagher reached its first straggling trees, they were stopped by several opponents, who yelled out in different languages and tones, “ Velasco ! Valdez ! Lombardy ! ” the names of their respective regiments.

“ Bassenvelt a-boo ! Whoop ! ” vociferated Gallagher, forgetting all prudence or reserve in the inspiring clash of arms, and laying furiously about him with his rapier, while lance and halberd rattled against his armour and the mailed covering of his charger. Count Ivon, too, assailed at all sides, was obliged to fight for life and death. In the fury of despair he drove his rowels into Rolando's sides and strove to plunge forward into the wood ; but the united efforts of rider and

steed could not overthrow the thick mass of opposing men, who now hemmed the two friends in the narrow road, and attacking them on all sides, seemed to make escape impossible.

Gallagher, less blinded than De Bassenvelt by the violence of feeling, saw that they must retreat or be lost. He therefore cried aloud,—

“Count Ivon, Count Ivon, for the love of Christ turn Rolando’s head and fly—there are dozens coming up the causeway—escape while a moment is left us!” At these words a yell from the royalists broke forth,—

“It is De Bassenvelt! seize him alive—drag him down—the traitor is ours—huzza! huzza!”

“Jesus have mercy on us!” exclaimed Gallagher, mingling French, English, and Irish, in a confusion of phraseology not to be described. “Are you mad, colonel, are you mad outright? You’re ruined for ever if you won’t run! Thieves, villains, make way! Trample them down right and left. Now, colonel, now, the road is clear—dash away, dash away! Och! There they have you again! now, now, for it—one plunge over that prostrate dog, and away!”

Every word was enforced by a blow or a thrust. Edge and point gave emphasis to prayer and oath, while the hoarse screams of the royalists, as they fell wounded under the horses’ feet, or bellowed out encouragement and counsel to each other, were joined by the war shouts of the two Walloons, attracted back to the scene by Gallagher’s well-known voice. With the last words we have recorded, he seized Rolando’s bridle, and fairly dragged him round. He then struck him a blow on the flank with the flat of his rapier and his whole strength, and in one resistless bound the quivering and foaming animal sprang across the bodies of the several entangled royalists, and darted like lightning along the open road. But poor Gallagher had not such good fortune. His heavier steed stumbled over the impeding carcasses and fell, and ere the gallant rider could recover or defend himself, or scarcely utter a dying imprecation, his helmet was torn from his head, and his skull cleft by redoubled blows, while the thirsty lances drank his life-blood through every crevice of his armour. The two dragoons met a similar fate; and when De Bassenvelt succeeded in pulling up his wounded and half maddened charger, he found himself alone, on the high parapet that overlooked the moat. He

paused and looked round. His long accustomed perception of such scenes told him the truth.

"Brave and devoted friend!" cried he, "thou art destroyed in saving me!" But his mind could not dwell on the common calamity of a gallant follower's death. The overwhelming object of its anxiety rushed up to view.

"Oh, God! and is she then lost to me? Dolt, idiot, madman that I have been! Oh, Theresa, Theresa, what are thy thoughts this moment — what thy fate? and thou, Beatrice, I must not forget thee — what has become of thee? To have had the destiny of two such beings in my hands, and to have lost them! Oh, agony and despair!"

The crowd of enemies now gaining on him and gathering upon the whole line of road, recalled him to his always ready aptitude to see events and act on them. A high sense of duty told him that no selfish wretchedness should let him waste a life on which the safety of so many still depended; hope, too, that never dying star, shone through his night of woe; and honour, which love sanctified with a still holier glow, spoke loudly to him in the language of resistless force.

"Be it so!" said he. "Let love, hope, and honour, uphold me in this trying hour. Let me live for the chance of recovering her who alone gives worth to life, for whom a day of happiness may yet shine out, and I be doomed to share in! On, on, Rolando, my good, my noble steed."

Clapping his gauntleted palm against the scales of steel that guarded his horse's neck, the usual neigh of acknowledgment told there was yet one who knew him and stood his friend. Far outstripping the cumbered foemen who hopelessly pursued his track, he soon regained the little column and put himself at its head. Making every arrangement for retreat that prudence could suggest, he joined with a party of scouts, and led their search on every side that Theresa could have fled by, and where it was possible to penetrate. The approach of morning, however, forced him to abandon the hopeless search. The royalist cavalry pursued him in numbers double his own. And, with a heart swelling with agony, but still animated with the valorous pride of concealing its sufferings, he went on his way with consummate skill, baffling his enemies, and leading the remnant of his intrepid followers, for the service of that

country for which he had courted ruin, and now even braved despair.

While the bustling scene just described was going on, Theresa and her anxious guides had made great progress towards escape from their manifold dangers. The shouts and clangour were tones of joy to Renault Claassen, who involuntarily hoped that De Bassenvelt, Lyderic, and Trovaldo might be mingled in a common destruction, since Lambert Boonen was no more, and thus the main impediments between him and Theresa be removed ; for while one rival such as those existed, his timid passion dared not imagine success. But now a new light burst suddenly on him. For nature, true to her system of incongruous developements, had chosen this moment of peril and distress, to open before him a broad scene of possible delight, which he gazed on, like the prophet on the promised land, till his head was dizzyed, and his heart thrilled with unspeakable emotion. As he moved along, with elastic step, leading Theresa's horse at its fastest walking pace, and keeping Jans Broeklaer panting beside him "at a good comelie trot" (as Blundeville describes the best movement of the Friezland horses), he murmured to himself in a strain of involuntary vivacity, — "Yes, yes, my day is come ! Fate has worked its silent course, leading me at last to what I dared not dream of reaching. All gone — all perished, perhaps, or at least scattered abroad beyond the probability of rivalry ! And she now wholly dependent on me, 'her best, her only friend' — what blessed words ! What claims on her gratitude ; what chances of her affection ! Can I forget her glowing looks when she saved me from Trovaldo's fury, and the prior's denouncement ? — her glance of deep emotion, when I passed before her presence, frightened at my own daring pretension in asking for her hand ? And was my father right, after all ? Has my own cowardice alone thwarted her secret inclinations, and balked the progress of my suit ? But *now*, now at least the coast is clear ; and if devotion, delicacy, and daring are of avail in such a case, she shall find me worthy of the heart I have so long stood aloof from claiming."

Such thoughts as these gave buoyancy to young Claassen's movements. He seemed all at once imbued with a bold sagacity which prompted a thousand ready expedients of escape from the ever-shifting difficulties that beset his course ; and

he passed through many risks unharmed, merely from the confident tone of mind which saved him from the over-caution that makes danger more dangerous. For five days he pursued the journey, of which he was the sole director, and for the chances of which he was in some measure prepared, although he had not imagined that the conduct of such an expedition was to devolve on him alone.

When Renault Claassen left the Spanish camp, and repaired to the castle outlet (for which he had made a rendezvous with Lambert Boonen in their short conference the preceding day), he had taken some precautions for the furtherance of Theresa's safety, the only object he had at that time in view. Representing his designs to Lyderic, as solely for the purpose of securing her for him, he had obtained, in Trovaldo's hand and seal, a passport for himself, his sister, and their male domestic, under fictitious names, which would amply provide for their security in all parts of the country that might be in possession of the royalist forces, or still in allegiance to the archdukes. A sufficient supply of money for the exigencies of the occasion also lined the pockets of Claassen's doublet; and thus equipped, he now took his way close along the course of the Meuse, on its right bank, knowing that that would be his safest road to gain the province of Guelders, the army before Welbasch keeping all its communications with Namur by the opposite side of the river, and that of the Count of Berg maintaining its connection with Brussels through the strong places between the Isle of Bommel and Louvain.

Jans Broeklaer acted the part of a scout most admirably, for he had a natural tact for its cunning duties; and he would creep and crouch through bush and brake, prying and listening, escaping detection, and obtaining information, with an amazing instinct of espionage. The hospitable farm-houses of Brabant always afforded a willing shelter at night, and abundance of support by day, while a small supply of homely linen was obtained on easy terms. And if any inquisitive questioning assailed the travellers, the production of a passport, with the broad seal of a Spanish general, quickly silenced the enquirers, and produced a reverential increase of attention.

Thus journeying, they reached, on the sixth day, that part of the Meuse on which Nimeguen is situated, having narrowly escaped many dangers of detection from the armed police and

other roving authorities, who examined their passports from time to time. As they started at sunrise the next morning from their sleeping-place, an unlicensed house of entertainment close to the bank of the river, they observed on the opposite side a strong fort of a peculiar construction, and well adapted, it seemed, for the purpose of defence or of annoyance to the navigation, which it was clearly destined to command. Neither Claassen nor Broeklaer were sufficiently familiar with any topography beyond the immediate circle of their native town to know what particular fort they saw before them. And she who formed the third individual of the party, Theresa, our woe-struck heroine, absorbed in the indulgence of her misery, could she have eyes or ears for aught that might arouse the attention of a happy or even thoughtless observer? From the moment that Claassen had snatched her from the maddening contemplation of the scene where all her earthly hopes were buried, she had submitted to his guidance, with a mechanical torpor that no excitement seemed again destined to shake off. The delicate care of her protector, the coarser kindness of her father's old servant, the varying scenes they passed through, the very dangers of their route, were alike insufficient to awaken her faculties from their state of mental abeyance. She eat, drank, slept — she listened to Claassen's cheering words, to Broeklaer's blunt comfortings — she smiled on them at times — but when she strove to speak, the words that would not yield to utterance seemed to fall back in a heavy load upon her sinking heart. The only phrase that had for days escaped her was an earnest entreaty that she might, if possible, be led back to her convent at Bruges. Renault Claassen vowed on the spot compliance with her wish, in all possible diligence, which too much precipitation was, however, sure to mar. He told her of his plan, the only safe one — of avoiding an immediate entrance into Flanders through Brabant, and of seeking the protection of Prince Maurice, and making their way through Guelders. But while he said this, and meant it all to tranquillise, and, as much as possible, satisfy, her mind, he secretly hoped that he was destined at no distant day to stand immovably between the beautiful Theresa and the cloister in which she meant to immure herself.

As the travellers now moved on, they observed a number of ~~canvass~~-covered boats stealing quietly along the course of the

river under the opposite bank, and listlessly carried with the current towards Nimeguen, whose spires were visible before them in the morning haze. Claassen and Broeklaer remembered having heard the preceding night that this morrow was the market day of the neighbouring town, and they concluded that the boats in question were freighted with peasantry and their rural merchandise. Yet there was a regularity in the compact and silent order of their liquid march, which spoke something more than the straggling train of open barges following the track of this first flotilla, and evidently filled with country people and their stores of live and dead stock. Claassen and Broeklaer were but civilians, unlearned in the stratagems of war; and even the peasants and farmers whom they overtook, or who joined them on the road, more accustomed than the citizens to its wiles, seemed unsuspecting of the important and memorable expedition whose progress they now gazed on. But in a short time they were all made involuntary witnesses of a brief but animating episode of civil war.

A considerable winding in the road, caused by the intervention of a ferry, and some local obstructions then existing, gave the boats, carried on smoothly by the stream, a considerable start of the land travellers; and by the time these latter had gained a height overlooking the eastern entrance of the town, the former were in the very act of being moored in close line by the sloping beach which led down from the open suburb. With a simultaneous movement of practised discipline, every awning was now at some concerted signal torn down, and each boat showed at the same instant a freight of mail-clad men, while lances, swords, and targets glistened thickly in the beams of the risen sun. A shout of triumph burst from every boat. One warrior, rapier in hand and helmet in air, sprang on shore, and in a minute more three hundred gallant followers tracked his advancing steps up to the gate of the surprised and unsuspecting town. The terrified inhabitants of the faubourg fled along its straggling streets, or hid within their houses; while the lazy guard that had lounged about the beach, instead of standing to their arms, fell instant victims to their too great confidence of safety. The town itself and its garrison were also quite unprepared. Had the attack been made at night, every man would have been found at his post; but so daring an attempt in the open eye of morning was not to have been

looked for, and could only have been imagined by such an intrepid and audacious partisan as Martin Schenck.

He, the leading chieftain who had first sprung on shore, now pushed forward to secure the object which had so long occupied all his thoughts, in the safe shelter of his fort on the river, in his bold inroads upon the archducal territories, in his scanty hours of rest on his hard soldier-bed, or in the saddle, where much more than half of his unquiet life had been passed. The guard at the gate, panic-struck at the fierce pageant of advancing enemies, but still more so at the utterance of the dreaded name which the chieftain's followers shouted in a stunning yell, abandoned their post, threw away their arms, and fled into the town; and the towers and walls rung with loud shouts of "Schenck! Schenck! Schenck!"—while the troops and citizens mingled together, in a confusion of alarm that a legion of demons could not have more forcibly aroused.

Pride, vengeance, and cruelty, were in the heart of Martin Schenck as he rushed onwards to the open gate; and in an instant more, pillage and ruin would have glutted him and his fierce band, but for the daring conduct of one man, whose arm was nerved with the giant vigour of revenge. Just as the foremost of the assailants were putting their feet on the draw-bridge which separated them from complete triumph, an individual whom chance brought to the spot, a fellow of fierce aspect, in attire half civil half military, whose face showed the workings of terrible passion, and who displayed the bald and disgusting aspect of an earless head, threw himself up towards the chain that moved the bridge, and swinging from it with violent gesture, raised it abruptly, casting Schenck and his nearest companions back upon those close behind him. Several pistol shots were immediately discharged across the ditch which now gaped between the assailants and their mutilated opponent. He was, however, unarmed by the assault; and quickly securing the chains, he ran under the shelter of the portal, rang for a few loud peals the alarm-bell, with which the gate was furnished, and then as rapidly seized a lighted match which the coward sentinel had flung down as he and his comrades fled, and applying it to the touch-hole of the nearest gun, sent a shower of bullets into the ranks of the disappointed and furious enemy.

The intrepid and unexpected conduct saved the town, and was the signal of utter discomfiture to the well-planned and bravely executed enterprise. Gun after gun in the immediate defence of the east portal was successively discharged by this solitary cannoneer; and while Schenck and his furious soldiers stormed, swore, and made frantic efforts to scale the wall, the garrison and citizens crowded towards them, to gain courage from the sight of their scanty members and desolate condition.

A hastily formed sortie was soon made from two of the other gates, and the assailants, taken in flank, were obliged to retreat into some houses of the suburb, and turn their late attack into a feeble and hopeless defence. The bells of the city rang out their assembling peals. The shouts of men, the screams of women and children, the roar of firearms, the clash of weapons and rattling of armour, combined to complete the scene. Priests, carrying the Host in one hand and a sword in the other, rushed out at the several gates at the head of the furious multitude, and the air rang with cries of vengeance against the hated and execrated Schenck.

Nothing was now left to this still undaunted adventurer but a retreat to his boats, and reliance on the chances of the river to escape the perils of the shore. He accordingly gave the word; and all that remained safe and sound of his men sallied from the houses, and slowly wended their way back to the beach, fighting inch by inch, but exposed to assaults of every possible missile from the open streets or the thronged windows under which they passed. All those whom wounds disabled from following were quickly butchered, and many fell on the disastrous retreat. But still numbers gained the boats, and, crowding in, seized their oars, and pulled away in all the selfish energy of ruin. Schenck, as he had been the first man to land, so was he the last to re-embark. He had gained the river's edge unharmed; and at length stepped over the edge of the crowded boat, which a feather's additional weight seemed sufficient to overturn. He had been close followed along the whole line of his retreat by the man before noticed, to whom his discomfiture was wholly owing, and who, armed with a small hatchet, and a shield which he had picked up in haste, dealt blows of violent intention against the enraged but still cool and undaunted chief, whose

rapier's point gave back each assault, with a well directed aim that left its tract in his furious enemy's blood.

And now, while Schenck stood on the edge of the boat, and the oarsmen gave it a final shove into the deep stream, this desperate wretch, streaming with gore, and brandishing his savage weapon, sprang from the beach, and in the unerring grasp of vengeance he seized Schenck round the body. Both tottered, stumbled, and fell into the water, while the boat was instantly upset, and the whole of its crew submerged. Schenck and his destroyer several times sank and rose again, the latter in the very pangs of death pouring out a mingled expression of gurgling curses and suffocating laughter, and striking with his weapon at the now defenceless head of his drowned enemy.

"Down, down to the pit, fell villain!" muttered he, "know you not Louis Drankaert, who now pays you back his debt! To hell, to hell! — I promised you death by fire or flood — choke, villain, choke! — Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

And then a sudden lapse of sinew — a faint struggle — a last gasp, and both sank together, in the deep-locked and double embrace of hate and death.

Ere an hour elapsed, the ferocious populace, diving as though they sought pearls in the bottom of the flood, dragged up the bloated body of their enemy, and its sundered quarters were instantly placed over the four principal gates of the town, mementos of the brutal spirit of the times, and the horror inspired by him, whose one grand quality of courage has made him in the page of history almost half a hero. A very few of the shattered expedition regained the fort, to recount the fate of their commander and comrades, and raise up a bloody spirit of retaliation.

The almost stupified beholders of this adventure either stood transfixed, or fled, or hid from its observance, as curiosity or fear worked strongest. Claassen and Broeklaer were among those who remained looking on till the bloody scene was over. Theresa, now familiar with desperate deeds, but almost incapable of being moved by any mortal shock, sat passively on her horse, her head turned from the conflict, her heart uninterested in its result, till Claassen at the close of the tragedy led her passively into the town, the fermented state of which promised and indeed secured him a free and unobserved passage on his intended progress.

CHAPTER XI.

SCARCELY had the travellers lost sight of Nimeguen, and before they were beyond the sounds of the bells and the artillery which jingled and crashed for joy, than they entered into a district forming a strong contrast to that through which they had hitherto journeyed. Instead of pastoral tracts moderately sprinkled with small military parties, and occasionally swept by a band of marauders from the various strong places in possession of the contending powers, the whole country was now occupied by the Dutch army, which spread widely across it in all directions, giving an extensive picture of military possession in its amplest term. Encampments dotted the pastures and meadows with their white tents and gay pavilions; fields of young corn were trampled down by cavalry stations; the roads cut up by the artillery and baggage-waggons. Every village and farm-house was an occupied post; and the whole face of nature disfigured by the forced yet animating display of preparation for some enterprise of unusual magnitude.

Young Claassen's object being to gain the immediate protection of Prince Maurice, he attempted no concealment or subterfuge, but pushed forward in the direction of the nearest outposts of the Dutch army. A few hours' travelling brought him within the limits of the patrols; and the first of the small bodies of mounted musketeers with which he came in contact stopped him, and commenced a close examination, which he attempted to cut short by a peremptory demand to be conducted forthwith to the head-quarters. But the object was not of such easy attainment as he supposed. Many forms were to be gone through before the cautious Dutchmen would suffer their idolised commander to run the risks of treachery, such as he had hitherto escaped from the hands of Panne, Renichon, and other agents of jesuitical designs against his life. Claassen determined to submit quietly to suspicions he could not avert; and he contented himself with sending his name in writing to Prince Maurice, with an intimation that he had important news to tell from Nimeguen and

Welbasch. He was then, with Broeklaer, placed in close security ; and Theresa yielded herself up in passive indifference to the care of one of those coarse specimens of the female sex who follow the fortunes of a camp, by whom she was treated with more delicacy than was important to the existing apathy of her feelings.

The dragoon who was despatched by the officer in command of the patrol soon found Prince Maurice, immersed in the occupations which he so indefatigably followed up. The name of Renault Claassen, and his promised intelligence from two points of such immediate interest, filled the active prince with anxiety for an instant conference ; and scouting all notions of treachery or danger, which some of those around him suggested, he announced his intention of repairing to the outpost, to examine the prisoners without the delay of waiting their arrival at his quarters. Having then calmly finished some orders which he was giving at the time, he rode off at a brisk pace, accompanied by his young and gallant brother Frederic-Henry, some officers of his staff, several of the commissioners from the various states of the union, who were in constant attendance upon his movements, and a large body of guards, which always escorted his visits to the precincts of the cantonments.

The clatter of horses' hoofs, trailing of rapiers, and rattling of spurs against the outer pavement and red-flagged floor of the farm-house, were the signals that told the arrival of the prince ; and Claassen soon received a summons to attend him, which he obeyed with nervous alacrity.

As he entered the wide and straggling apartment, he instantly recognised Maurice, although the civilian's costume which he had worn in his stolen visit to Bruges, in the character of Mynheer Hoogstraaten, was changed for the martial habiliments that suited him far better. He now occupied a high-backed chair, at the upper end of the table, from which the pewter measures and earthen mugs, and the streams of beer that had copiously been spilled from them, were hastily removed, as the carousing soldiers hurried out to the court-yard, to receive their general with due honours. On three or four stools at either side the prince were as many grave looking personages, with dresses of a doubtful pattern, something (like their air and manner) of a camp costume grafted on city habits.

These were the commissioners of the states ; and in his passing glance, Claassen thought he had seen one of them before. At the prince's back, and grouped in various parts of the room, stood several officers in handsome uniforms, with scarfs, feathers, and embroidery, displayed in all the profusion of the prevailing fashions, none of their gay habiliments being concealed by armour, which was only worn on this occasion by the mounted guard, which surrounded the house and sent out patrols and videttes in various directions, to obviate an ambush or a surprise, the commonest among the tactics of those times. On one of the twisted and clumsily carved arms of the prince's chair sat, or rather lolled, a boy of about sixteen, half leaning against the back, and familiarly placing one hand on Maurice's shoulder, while the other held a rapier nearly as tall as himself, with which he played as though it were something more of a toy than a weapon of death. He was dressed in a plain buff suit without any ornament, but his bearing showed that he was of higher rank than any of the decorated veterans, with Maurice's sole exception.

As Claassen was led forward by an officer, and before he had time to finish his profound obeisance to the prince, the latter exclaimed in his usual abrupt tone, and in Flemish, which he spoke fluently,—

“ Well, Mynheer Renault, so you too have turned renegade ! not content like your false sire with betraying the good cause, you have linked yourself to the tyrants' ranks, and turned pander to one of their basest minions. You perceive I am not without news from Bruges, and so you cannot hope to deceive me. I tell you at once what I know of you — and now let me ask for what sinister purpose durst you seek an interview with me, and whence come you, for that I am yet to learn ? ”

While poor Renault almost sank on the ground with confusion, under this burst of reproach, and the stern looks of the prince and his officers, the commissioners exchanged glances, pursed up their lips, and shook their heads, in disapprobation of Maurice's style of interrogatory.

“ Ah,” whispered one to his next neighbour, “ it is not thus his sagacious father would have questioned a spy — fewer words and more management would have wormed the truth

out of the craftiest that strove to circumvent the great William."

"Well, Mynheer Claassen, have you nothing to say? Does the confusion of guilt strike you dumb?" said Maurice.

"No, your highness," replied Renault, summoning up the whole strength of conscious innocence; "but your unlooked for, and most undeserved, accusations overpower me — yet I feel that I shall presently be able to speak, and repel these slanders."

A murmur ran round the military circle. The youth by Maurice's side started up, and would have sprung upon the audacious young burgher; but Maurice caught his arm, and held him close to his side, while he smiled encouragingly on Renault, and looked significantly on those around him. He then said to the youth, whose arm he still held,—

"Look, my brother, on that young man's face — and you, gentlemen all, learn a lesson in the open book of nature! There is no falsehood in yon flushed cheek, nor in those full eyes: an honest man can never look calm and cool under a false accusation. Such is *my* way of discovering innocence — let more wily politicians boast of unmasking guilt! Mynheer Claassen, make no reply to my reproaches, nor fear to have offended me by your bold and just retort. I have heard ill of you, 'tis true, but I believe it not. To *my* satisfaction at least that look disproves it quite. Cheer up, then, and freely tell me how and why you are here?"

But gratitude and pleasure now for a while kept Renault speechless, as far different feelings had before. But he felt that he was not in a presence where weakness should be indulged; and clearing his voice, he spoke again.

"Your highness does me only justice, as at any time I can prove; but I will not now intrude my insignificant justification upon you; of my father's conduct I must still less venture to speak. I should be the last to view too harshly what arose from anxious terrors at my danger ——"

"Humph!" muttered the prince.

"Suffice it to say, that I am heart and soul devoted to the cause of my country, and your highness, and ready to lay down my life in the service of both."

"Enough, enough! you have my full confidence — go on — whence came you, Mynheer Renault?"

“ Direct from Nimeguen, your highness, where I witnessed eight hours back a scene, which I grieve to be the first to report to you.”

“ Quick, then, let’s hear it — bad news grows putrid in the keeping — what did you see in that strong hold of bigotry ? Schenck has not failed in his projected attack ? ”

“ I saw him, and hundreds of his brave followers, perish this morning in the unsuccessful attempt ; and his quartered body is now fixed over the city gates.”

These words created a burst of exclamation, and a display of gestures, which showed the importance given by every listener to the fact related. Prince Maurice struck his clenched fist against the table: then put his open hand to his forehead ; and after a moment’s pause, which was evidently occupied with more than mere individual matters, he exclaimed,—

“ Good-by to Nimeguen ! A year’s farewell to the Rhine ! The point is now decided. This, Mynheer Claassen, is bad news indeed. And so, my friends, Martin Schenck is gone. After four times changing sides, doing mischief to-day to those he fought for yesterday and would betray or battle for to-morrow, he has met his fate at last, and died by chance in the right cause. So much for the man. What more, Mynheer Claassen ? you have something to tell from Welbasch too ? you have I hope to strike a balance between good and evil tidings ? De Bassenvelt still holds out ? Why do you shake your head and look so foolish ? speak, I prithee ! ”

“ Your highness must then bear with more than my foolish looks,” said Renault testily ; “ Welbasch Castle is sacked, and blown up from its deepest foundations. I saw it a mass of ruins.”

“ What ! ” cried Prince Maurice, starting on his feet, “ and the brave garrison ? the glorious De Bassenvelt ? Tell me, sir, what of him ? my noble young friend ? is he safe — a prisoner — escaped ? ”

“ Your highness asks more than I can answer. I fled from the smoking ruins as the assailants and defenders seemed alike destroyed in the terrible explosion : I —— ”

“ And why did you fly, sir ? Why at least come before me with this vague account of so direful a calamity ? Brave De Bassenvelt, and has this been thy fate ! Cut off in the

prime of life, the very spring-time of honour and fame! When did this happen, sir? Are you sure you witnessed this?"

"Six days ago I saw what I relate," said Renault tersely, neither having nor assuming any sympathy with Prince Maurice's grief, for the rival whom he considered but as a bold libertine, quite forgetting, in his personal feelings, that he was a brave patriot as well.

"Six days! and he has not joined me — then he *must* have perished!" said Maurice despondingly. "And now, Mynheer Claassen, that you have told me what you saw, and when it happened, and as I do give credit to all the woful news of which you have been no niggard, pray tell me how it was that you were at all at Welbasch, and why, as I asked just now, you abandoned it at such a critical, such a fatal moment?"

"Your highness, I fear," replied Renault, somewhat softened again by this compliment to his veracity, "can look on me but as an ill-omened bird, croaking bad news into your princely ear, but it was no less my inclination than my duty to tell even the worst."

"What! is there more coming? Have you then worse to say — if worse than De Bassenvelt's destruction could befall?"

"No, your highness."

"Then speak to my questions, sir, without more dallying. — What made you at Welbasch? Why did you bend your course to Nimeguen? What brings you here?"

"Brief answers suit prompt questionings, and your highness shall be obeyed. I repaired to Welbasch Castle in the track of the assaulting foe, to rescue, if possible, a maiden of surpassing beauty and virtue from the seizure of its libertine lord. Heaven having aided my views, and thrown her into my protection, I, accompanied by a faithful follower of her house, took the course of the Meuse as the best route for safety; and furnished with a pass from Don Juan de Trovaldo, I traversed Brabant, and came by Nimeguen, in the hope of finding in Prince Maurice of Nassau a generous protector for the maiden, whose father once possessed, ay, and deserved, his friendship."

"By Saint George! Mynheer Claassen, your blunt bear-

ing does not belie your birthplace nor your parentage. The sturdy burghers of Bruges have always been ready enough to bandy words with their betters — ay, and blows too, I must admit. But let me tell you, young sir, I do not like you the worse for this — and mayhap I have provoked it too. But this maiden of your chivalry — where is she, and who, since I have been so honoured by her father's friendship?"

"Ay, my good brother, where is she, indeed? Let her be brought forward, that we may at least judge of her beauty, however we may take her virtue on the credit of her wandering knight," said Frederic-Henry, while all the younger, and not a few of the senior, officers smiled at the boy-prince's vivacity, and looked anxious approbation of his request. But Maurice assumed a grave aspect to check the growing licence of look and speech.

"Brother," said he, "this is scarcely meet, when we learn the ruin of two of our bravest officers, the death of at least one, and the destruction of the only effective hope which we had for the liberation of Brabant. Nor, let me add, gentlemen, is it seemly to encourage an unthinking boy in his glibing discourse on any female, but particularly on one who, it appears, is in want of protection — the more so as she is represented to be young and beautiful. I will see, Mynheer Claassen, this damsel of your care-taking, and if she be indeed the daughter of a former friend, she may reckon on my aid. Let some one show me to the apartment of this young lady."

While Maurice rose from his seat, and an attendant officer prepared to lead him to Theresa, Frederic-Henry, and several of the officers, indulged in various quirks and quibbles. The young prince said, quite loud enough to be heard by Maurice, whom he loved with an affection half brotherly, half filial, but whom he stood in no awe of, —

"Aha! there goes Scipio — or Solomon — which must we call him, De Grimberghe? What will sister Gertrude say, when I tell her this? Come, Barnevelt, let's follow him, and be ready to rescue the lady — see how frightened the young burgher looks!"

Maurice would not have heeded these pert sallies, nor the suspicion of his military suite, to whom his gallantries were no secret; but his quick eye caught an expression on the grave faces of the commissioners, as if they disapproved his

questionable visit to the damsel, and were disappointed themselves at the failure of Frederic-Henry's proposal. He knew that at that critical moment it behoved him to stand well with the grey or grisly bearded junta, who watched all his movements, both in morals and war, with a jealous scrutiny. He therefore stopped, turned short, and said, —

“ On second thoughts it may be well that I do not see this maiden alone. Too many recent instances have we had that beauty may be the mask of deceit and the lure for weakness, and I must not trust my judgment or my steadiness on a point so trying. We will therefore all receive the lady here — and let none forget her sex or her situation. Conduct her hither with all decorous courtesy !”

As an officer retired in obedience to this order, Maurice resumed his seat, casting a look of severe reproof on his volatile brother, and one little less so on the young men whom he had addressed by name, and who had shown no discouragement to his sallies. Renault Claassen's trembling joints and flushed countenance showed the anxiety with which he awaited Theresa's entrance, for he had recognised among the prince's train one at least whom his apprehensions told him might prove a redoubtable obstacle to his hopes.

In a few minutes Theresa entered ushered by the officer, and accompanied by the woman, whose presence was the only semblance she could obtain of female protection. The day was not long gone by when Theresa would have been overpowered with confusion at braving the scrutiny of such an assemblage as she now came before. But she took her place on the chair offered to her by Prince Maurice's orders, with a cold indifference that seemed to many of the sneering and libertine observers indicative of a hardihood very remote from modesty or virtue. Renault Claassen approached her, and spoke a few cheering words, too low for others to hear ; and she raised on him, in return, one of those looks of pensive and grateful acknowledgment which sunk so deeply and so deceivingly into his heart, and which possessed an expression of ineffable sweetness that not an individual present could now resist being affected by in various degrees. Maurice himself, who had meant to set an example of the coldest decorum and formality, was so struck with the beauty and grace of the lovely girl, that he rose from his seat, took off

his plumed hat, and respectively bowing came close up to her and said, —

“ Young lady, your mien and the expression of those looks speak too plainly your station of life and your state of feeling to allow me to treat you with aught but the most distinguished respect. You know that you are addressed by Maurice of Nassau — who, then, has *he* the honour of addressing? ”

With these words, and before Theresa could succeed in forcing up a sentence of reply, he gently took her hand which she had placed on her breast as if to aid the utterance of her thoughts. The involuntary pressure of his fingers, which were moved at once by gallantry and pity, touched the spring that acted on the machinery of a ring of curious construction, a great curiosity of the times, and which Theresa had worn for several weeks past, not a little proud of the source from which she derived it.

“ One ! two ! three ! ” said the tiny bell of the diminutive repeater, which was then thought a most seemly, as it was a costly, ornament for a lady’s thumb. At the fairy sounding of the hour the prince startled, and quickly raised the lovely hand, to convince another sense besides feeling and hearing, and then exclaimed, —

“ Why — how — what ! It is my own ring — my gift to Van Rozenhoed’s fair daughter ! And do I indeed see before me the beautiful Heiress of Bruges ? Theresa ! She whom report at least has made the wife of Baron de Roulemonde, in this destitute state — without equipage or servants, the wandering companion of a young burgher ! How came this to pass ? Explain, young lady, these strange discrepancies, for your father’s and your honour’s sake.”

At Prince Maurice’s announcement of Theresa’s identity every one present crowded round, to gain a nearer view of one so celebrated, and whose adventures had formed a chief topic of gossip, misconception, and surmise, in court, camp, and city, for the last three months. Foremost among the throng of anxious faces was that of a young officer, whose decoration of a silver key dangling at his breast announced him to be one of the prince’s chamberlains — the same Arnoul de Grimberghe who had owed his appointment to the interest of his old master, Van Rozenhoed, and who had been one of the first among the candidates for Theresa’s hand in the presentation

of suitors at Rozenhoed House. He now shoved aside with little ceremony young Barneveldt and various other scions of the first families in Holland, who served in the Dutch army. Even the rank of Frederic-Henry did not meet with more respect, and it was only Prince Maurice's rebuking look that made Arnoul stop short at his side, and content himself with gazing at Theresa over his general's shoulder.

"Stand back, gentlemen, the young lady is oppressed by this uncourteous ardour," said Maurice, motioning back the circle, which retreated several steps, all but the young chamberlain, who maintained his post. Theresa meanwhile, after various ineffectual efforts to speak, mingled with imploring looks on the prince, as if praying his consideration, turned at last towards Claassen, and by a significant gesture entreated him to be the medium of the required explanations. Maurice, acting on this expressed wish, turned attentively to Claassen, and motioned him to speak.

"It is, indeed, the lovely daughter of Van Rozenhoed, who now claims your highness's protection," said Renault; "report has spoken falsely, in giving her to the blackest villain that walks the earth. She would die sooner than wed Lyderic de Roulemonde, though the power of the archdukes has commanded the sacrifice. Van Rozenhoed, entrapped by the tyrants, and I speak it with shame, denounced by my own father, is now their prisoner in Brussels — his property no doubt confiscated, and his daughter, as you see her, forlorn and desolate, seeking the shelter of a cloister, and though lately so rich, so sought for, now reduced to the poor protection of an humble friend, and one old servant——"

"No, by heavens, she is not!" exclaimed Arnoul de Grimberghe, rushing in front of the circle, and addressing the words which followed by turns to Maurice, Theresa, and the company at large — "No, my prince, it shall never be said that she whom I admired and sought in splendid wealth, the child of my benefactor and best friend, shall find me shrink back in the hour of reverse and ruin. I here solemnly renew my well-known offer for her hand: I throw myself humbly at her feet, and make my unworthy proposal; and I call all present to witness it, and to hold me pledged to keep it good, though a stuyver nor a gem of her once unbounded dower be forthcoming or in chance of recovery!"

The generous youth then knelt before Theresa, while his beaming looks showed a fine and ennobling contrast to his light and careless bearing, when he asked her hand in the full tide of her prosperity. Theresa returned his looks by one of speaking sensibility ; her eyes filled, her lips moved, but no word came forth to soften the rejection of the disinterested offer, which it was however plain she did not entertain for an instant.

While the prince gave his hand to the young chamberlain, and uttered a short expression of approval and praise, a tall personage, of lank aspect and formal demeanour, stepped forth and said, —

“ Most noble prince, let me in my turn be heard ; while a stripling like this sets such an example, can Cornelis van der Gobble hang back ? — No ; I am now ready to fulfil, in serious proof, the offer of my poor person and not quite despicable fortune, which I too made — but, as your highness knows, with no intent or hope of its acceptance by this fair damsel — in honour of her virtue and beauty, and of her father's name.”

This solemn proposition on the part of “ the lank commissioner,” as Van der Gobble was familiarly called, excited amusement, that was not unmixed with a chivalric excitement among the warrior audience ; and it is possible that Theresa, forlorn and destitute as she now was, might have been assailed by as numerous a tribe of suitors as had offered to her on a more memorable occasion, had not Prince Maurice observed the deep pain which this last speech caused her, and hastily turned the tide of gallantry.

“ Gentlemen, this is but right and fair — worthy of manly spirits as ye both prove yourselves ; and the lady who hears your offers shall, under my guarantee, decide on them in fitting time and place. But still there was one whose claims may yet exist, in force too powerful to allow much hope for the acceptance of yours. Say, Mynheer Claassen, as you are the lady's spokesman, how stands my friend De Bassenvelt in her regard ? ”

“ As high in her admiration, I believe, as one can whom she has never seen.”

“ Not see him — though you said erewhile he had forcibly seized and held her in his castle ! How's this ? ”

“ Purposes of his own, unknown to me, your highness, have guided a conduct of mixed violence and forbearance, which I have no means to unravel.”

Maurice paused awhile, and cast a keen look at Theresa, and watched her narrowly while he spoke again, —

“ I must not keep up this questioning, which agitates her whom my wish is to tranquillise and serve to the utmost. But yet in the duty of the guardianship which Providence seems to have devolved on me, I must know as best I can the state of her heart and desires. There are honourable offers for her hand, while present events cannot allow of a decision. She shall, therefore, rest in my charge, and Holland holds forth fair security for one so precious and so fair.”

At these words, which intimated the frustration of Theresa's only hope, — the sanctuary of her early friends, the good nuns of St. Anne, — she rose from her seat, and throwing herself at his feet, caught his hand, and suddenly uttered in tones of poignant anguish, —

“ In mercy, send me to my cloister — it is my only wish — my last hope !”

Maurice seemed struck forcibly by this terse but most eloquent appeal. Whatever his previous cogitations had been, they were evidently much disconcerted. He still held her hand, as he raised her up, and one arm circled her waist with a respectful clasp. He paused again, as if he calculated some difficult point of belief ; and again he spoke, half to her and half to Claassen, while his eye was intently fixed on her alone.

“ One more question I must put, to understand the mystery of this maiden's feelings. How beats her heart, in indifference or sympathy, with the gentle suit of Master Lambert Boonen ?”

No sooner had he pronounced this name than he felt the fair form within his clasp shudder in every fibre. No scream burst from the lips — no tear started to the eye — but a sigh, that spoke the heart's depth of anguish, trembled as it escaped her almost bursting bosom.

“ Good God ! she faints ! Room — air — water !” cried Maurice, in manly emotion, carrying his insensible burden out to the court-yard ; while the by-standers hurried in search

of remedies, with an intense haste, seldom excited in those familiar with battle and death.

“ Ah, Mynheer Claassen,” continued Maurice, while poor Renault knelt, despairingly, beside the beautiful object of his devotion,—“ ah, then, I have struck the true chord of her grief—God pity her, and pardon me, if my abruptness has done her harm! Tell me, then, how is this? Her heart is given to Boonen? Is it so? Give me this clue to a wild mystery.”

“ Her heart is indeed in Lambert Boonen’s grave!” murmured Claassen.

“ What, then, is he dead?” said the prince, in a quick whisper, which delicacy towards Theresa kept from more emphatic utterance.

“ She saw him destroyed in the explosion, and buried beneath the ruins of Welbasch!” again exclaimed Claassen, in an agitated under-tone.

“ Then, my friends, since this, indeed, be so,” rejoined Maurice, “ this scene may finish here—and all who feel with me, may well wear mourning!”

He then gently disencumbered himself of Theresa, who was received into Renault Claassen’s trembling arms; and in a tone of more seriousness than he had used during the whole conference, he added,—

“ This painful drama of untoward love draws to its close. Poor girl! nothing, indeed, shall contravene her sad desire. When this passes over, and she is in a state to move, let her be brought to my quarters, and after a night’s rest she may be able to resume her course. I see the maiden no more! nor do I shame to say that her excelling charms are the cause of this resolve. It must be a colder pulse than mine that would not throb quick under their influence. I now know her secret, although but half revealed. Now is no time for solving riddles, though this adventure might grace the pages of romance.

“ Mynheer Claassen, it is plain how your heart stands in this affair. But you shall not be balked in your completion of an honourable task. Pursue your journey, and resume your charge, with the faithful servant who has hitherto kept convoy with you. The way is now clear up to the very walls of Bruges. An escort of fifty lancers shall bear you company

to-morrow, nor quit you until you are in the banlieue of the Franc. Arnoul de Grimberghe, you shall command the escort — you are worthy of the post. Now, gentlemen all, to our quarters ! This evening you shall know important plans, on which this last hour has had no trifling influence. Let some one go on towards Nimeguen, for all details of Schenck's mishap — the rest follow me to the camp !”

In a few minutes the prince, having seen that Theresa was gradually recovering from the shock, and that a litter was ready for her conveyance, mounted his horse, and galloped off, leaving Claassen, Broeklaer, and every necessary assistance, to attend her removal.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER a night of calm suffering to Theresa, of anxious solicitude to so many who now sympathised with her misfortunes, and of considerable bustle and important preparation on the part of the whole army, the morning at length broke, in the propitious glow of midsummer, to enable all to follow their several destinations, on the longest day, and under the brightest sky of the year.

A better equipment than they had hitherto journeyed with was now, by the prince's care, ready for Theresa and her attendant guides. A palfrey of gentler breed, and beseeingly caparisoned, replaced her jaded jennet. Two others were prepared for Claassen and Broeklaer. Arnoul de Grimberghe, at the head of his gallant band of lancers, paraded in front of the old and castellated château where Maurice had for some time held his quarters, the best suite of whose apartments had been now given up to Theresa's occupation, and where Gertrude van Mechlen, the devoted companion of the prince, had herself presided over every arrangement for our poor heroine's comfort, without one pang of jealousy, and without intruding her own appearance on her.

The lark that in the ecstasy of song fluttered his pinions towards the morn, was not more matinal than the wretched maiden, for whom all the cares of manly chivalry and female tenderness could not obtain an hour's repose or a moment of joy. She was ready for departure with the dawn; and when she mounted her palfrey, she saw the arrangements for her honourable treatment, if not with total indifference, at least without pride or pleasure.

As the little cavalcade with its attendant guard moved away, every token of interest and respect was evinced by the individuals of the prince's household. Gertrude van Mechelen, in all but the sanctifying forms of the church his wife, and in all else a model for many a legitimate partner of prince, peer, or peasant, watched from a window, with her handmaids, the departure of her who had so excited her feelings without alarming her passions. Theresa, depressed and absorbed as she was, was nevertheless too much imbued with innate feelings of delicacy and kindness, not to appreciate that which was thus shown to her; and she bowed profoundly and gracefully to the remarkable woman, whom the will of her lover and the word of a priest might have in one minute made a princess, as was more than once on the point of being accomplished during Maurice's long attachment.

As the cavalcade wound along the road towards Husden, the direction of their route into Flanders, they saw in full display the brilliant spectacle of the army of the States, in the act of being reviewed by their renowned general, previous to their departure on an expedition which was ere many days to make all Europe ring with the echo of their fame. That veteran army, composed of the finest elements of martial greatness, now stood in serried ranks, or marched with firm step before the hero, to whom almost every individual was personally known, and who had shared in almost every perilous exploit by which they had earned such an honour. Even young Claassen's heart, albeit not framed of warlike impulses, throbbed quickly as he gazed in admiration on the sight; and Jans Broeklaer himself, as he peered cunningly into the various divisions, half wished that he had been bred a soldier.

This celebrated army consisted of small contingents, epitomes as they might fairly be called, of the most renowned nations of Europe. Holland and Zealand, with the other

states of the union, the most deeply pledged in the great contest which was in agitation, were amply represented by the columns forming the main force of the army, commanded by Louis, Ernest, and Justin of Nassau, the three Counts de Solms, Oliver van den Temple, and various others of note. The other quotas were composed of four thousand English under Francis and Horace Vere, those celebrated brothers, former companions of Sydney the second Bayard, and whose talent and courage were conspicuous during years of warfare; a thousand Scotch, led on by the gallant Colonel Edmonds; as many Swiss, the first who had served in the Dutch armies, headed by the brave Hans Kriech, whose conduct, though a simple peasant, ensured him a monument; several regiments of French and Germans; and finally twelve hundred Walloons of the revolted garrison of St. Andrew, who, formed into a regiment, of which young Frederic-Henry was appointed colonel, were distinguished from the gay uniforms and mailed coats of the rest, by plain buff suits, the only clothing that could be hastily procured, to replace the rags in which they had been left by the default of pay while in the service of the archdukes. Attached to the staff of Prince Maurice were the Prince of Anhalt, the Duke of Holstein, Count Coligny, nephew of the famous admiral, Lord Gray, and various other young men of distinguished rank, who all flocked to the Low Countries to learn the art of war under the most celebrated captain of the day. Of these various materials was composed this famous army; but all so organised, so disciplined, so accustomed to obey their common chief and to fight side by side, that no difference existed but of uniform and language, and no rivalry but the generous emulation of honour.

As Renault Claassen, slowly riding beside Theresa, turned round, and still slackened his horse's speed, to gaze awhile longer on this proud array, the whole was in the act of defiling before the prince-general, for he had been, since daybreak, on the ground passing them in review. And now, as the spectacle concluded, his quick glance turning from the plain where their manœuvres had taken place, he espied the little cortège, followed by the lancers, whom De Grimberghe retained at such a distance behind as not to press on, or intrude too near the fair charge they were meant to protect, but not

embarrass. In a moment an aide-de-camp darted from Maurice's side, and riding up to Renault, told him that his highness desired to have speech with him. Renault, dazzled by the imposing display of the prince's power, and somewhat nervous under the recollection of his blunt and authoritative demeanour, made ready to obey this new summons with the best face he could. Instructing Broeklaer to ride slowly on beside his young mistress, he accompanied the aide-de-camp to the group, in which the prince was easily distinguished from all (even the others of the house of Nassau wearing, like him, the orange panache and scarf) by their air of anxious subordination, and his own of simple dignity.

"Good morrow, Mynheer Claassen!" said he, with the frank and cordial tone, which, when he chose it, put all men at their ease in his presence. "Good morrow, and good speed to you and your lovely charge. I have only stopped your journey now to say one word, which the scene of yesterday and the news you brought me, left no time to speak. You are now on the way to your native town — you will find it, I fear, in a state of sad commotion, the unrighteous cause of tyranny and corruption holding the upper hand. Please Heaven, they shall not keep it long! You will tell your brother burghers the goodly sight you now behold; and say that, let me and my brave army be where we may, let the designs of the States and our allies be shrouded in whatever secrecy good policy requires, the day of deliverance for Flanders can never be distant, if freedom is in the hearts of her citizens, and prudence resume her place in their heads. You may so do much for the cause, and redeem the wrong which has been done it, while you repair an individual ill in one generation, by the services you render in another. Commend me to the lovely Theresa — and mind ye that you and my amorous chamberlain hold no rivalry on the road but in most meet discretion; nor strive to halt the pious maid, on the pilgrimage of seclusion from the world which its miseries have driven her to!"

With these words the prince turned away towards another part of the field, leaving Renault deeply blushing at the sagacity which seemed to have penetrated his secret hopes, and too much confused to have uttered a reply even to the early part of the speech, which had reference to matters not so pointedly

personal. Ashamed, however, of remaining alone, while many of the young officers turned glances on him and smiles at each other as they rode off, he too wheeled round his steed, and soon resumed his place by the side of her whose presence made him forget all the world beside.

The journey all the way into the very territory of the Franc of Bruges was unvaried by any circumstance that might make any one league more interesting than the rest. The flat scenery, unchanging weather, and the monotonous demeanour of the party, all harmonised with the sad tone of feeling which men and nature seemed alike to take from her who was the chief object of the scene. The country was deserted; the roads unpeopled; the towns were in keeping of their inhabitants, the scanty troops of the archdukes uninfected by mutiny being all drawn away towards Brabant; and the timid burghers who kept watch on their ramparts showed no disposition to hazard a sortie, or risk an encounter with what might be the advance of a hostile army. It was thus that small bands of soldiers like those of De Grimberghe, frequently during those wars traversed whole districts, passing by a hostile population of thousands shut up inactively within their walls.

During the whole route the two young guardians of our and their heroine observed towards each other a sullen civility, which respect for her, rather than reciprocal regard, kept within its bounds. Arnoul de Grimberghe looked on the burgher with all the pride of rank; and the sturdy independence of Renault Claassen's class was not rendered less than usually uncompromising in its present representative, who considered his escort and forced companion on this occasion as a type of the haughty noblesse with whom his ancestors had held many a hard struggle for privilege and power, which, however, they were always ready to abandon when the common enemy assailed them. Had therefore a troop of Spanish or Italian mercenaries attacked young Grimberghe and his "plump of spears," Renault would have no doubt taken a brand and fought valiantly by his side. But as no such accident varied the tenor of their march, they parted as they had met, without any approach towards friendship, and with no overt act of enmity.

The young chamberlain had observed towards Theresa the most delicate demeanour, carefully fulfilling his duty, and not even once obtruding himself on her company, beyond the times

in which he joined in the repasts which his men provided at their different halting stations. In fact, he was quite easy under her virtual rejection of his offer. He had made it in a moment of ardent feeling, and would have gladly fulfilled it for honour's sake. But his heart was untouched even by Theresa's charms. He was not a youth to sigh and pine for hopeless love, and he would carelessly have seen the prize carried from him, by one whom he considered so much his inferior as Renault Claassen, or even by the grotesque Van der Gobble, the motives of whose renewed proposals we shall by and by have occasion to explain.

De Grimberghe had hoped to gain the term of his expedition on the third day; but when he arrived at the last safe station which he and his lancers could occupy for the night, it was too late for Theresa and Claassen to reach Bruges before the hour at which the gates were closed. The party therefore halted at the farm-house fixed on for that purpose, and after due placing of guards and such preparations as safety required, retired to rest. The close neighbourhood to the territory of the Franc made this the most hazardous position yet encountered; and De Grimberghe did not for a moment suffer his eyes to wink, nor quit his post of observation, till the bright streaks of morning broke upon the doubtful twilight, which had never given place to actual darkness. But the state of the city gave ample employment to those within, and left the environs undisturbed, and Arnoul with no opportunity for proving more than his prudence. In a few minutes of preparation, horses were saddled and men ready; and the road to the city being now clear, De Grimberghe prepared for his leave-taking, as soon as Theresa was fairly within the territory of Bruges. She was soon beyond the boundary-line, marked by a few painted posts; and the young chamberlain, after a courteous speech of farewell, answered by repeated gestures of grateful acknowledgment from Theresa, wheeled round to retrace his steps, exchanging cold salutations with Renault, who gave the last garniture of his purse in largess to the soldiers. Ere the cloud of dust thrown up by the retreating troop was out of sight, the now unguarded trio were close to the first outpost of the city, whose three or four massive spires stood vaguely in the morning mist, o'ertopped by one battlemented tower of surpassing height and beauty, its granite coronel gemmed by the

crimson beams which the yet unrisen sun threw from below the horizon.

Renault was somewhat surprised to find that not only the outposts but even the city gates were guarded by Spanish soldiers, who had replaced the burgher trained-bands by which that duty had been performed, even before Trovaldo and his few troops were called off to the army. Not one of the municipal authorities, usually attending to receive and examine strangers, were now to be seen; but the party was admitted, with scrutiny so slight as scarcely to deserve the name. Renault's enquiries into this state of loose discipline from the subaltern in command at the gate obtained him the information that the city had at its urgent request obtained a strong garrison from Brussels; that the whole population, including every official person, was at that moment poured into the streets and squares, to witness the sun-rise procession of the governor and burgomasters, to hear a solemn *Te Deum* in honour of Schenck's defeat and death, and De Bassenvelt's destruction, which were that morning to be celebrated in every town of Flanders and Brabant. "And in addition," said the officer, "to these glorious triumphs of the royal army, it is notorious that the force of the bold rebel Maurice is utterly dispersed and driven before that of the Count de Berg, so that every loyal subject may well abandon himself to rejoicing. On, on then, and you may catch the procession before it enters the cathedral. Hark! there is the crash of the music. The sackbuts and trumpets sound the march! Life of my saint! how unlucky that I should be on duty! Turn out, soldiers, and down on your knees. The blessed image of our Lady and the sacred Host are abroad!"

While the pious cut-throats obeyed, halbert and arquebuss in hand, and Jans Broeklaer, a good catholic, duly crossed himself at the sounding of the little bell which confirmed the latter part of the Spanish officer's speech, Claassen feigned a sympathy with these rites, which as a stanch Lutheran he cordially hated; and for caution sake he quitted his horse and requested Theresa to let him assist her to dismount from hers. She tacitly obeyed the suggestion, following all through her long journey the counsels of her devoted protector, and her mind being now immersed in quiet resignation at the approaching fulfilment of her vow. Renault hastily handed over the

bridle to Broeklaer, directing him to make the best of his way to his father's house in Tanner's Street. He then pulled up his short cloak close to the ruff that stood high round his face, and dragging the leaf of his hat over his brow, he hoped to pass unnoticed through the crowd. He gently assisted Theresa in somewhat similar efforts at concealment, closing the hood of her travelling mantle upon her head. Then urging the necessity of great caution, he placed her arm under his, and both their hearts throbbing high, but from far different feelings, they took their way through one of the narrow streets which led the most directly to his father's residence.

But their progress was soon stopped by the crowds that poured out from every side towards the quarter in which "Notre Dame" is situated, and which they were obliged to traverse to gain the only refuge where they could find safety. Had Renault's object been at once to place Theresa in the convent, he might easily have passed by another route, and reached the remote and quiet quarter of *Ouden Zac*. But a still unformed project, which he dared not venture to acknowledge to himself, much less to act on, increased his confused fear of being discovered, and having Theresa snatched from his side; and he allowed himself and his helpless companion to be hustled along through by-lanes and passages, with the current of the crowd, till at length they found themselves suddenly borne out upon the open quay called the *Duyver*, mentioned in our earliest chapters, at one end of which is situated the cathedral of Notre Dame, and the whole of which commands a full view of Rozenhoed House and its surrounding scenery, formerly described. As they stood there, unwilling to move further, and unable to retrace their way into the secrecy of the obscure passages they had just come through, the procession, at that moment crossing the bridge over the canal communicating between Rozenhoed quay and the street leading to the great square, burst upon their view, causing to both a pang of surprise and terror. For while loud shouts from the mob blended the titles of the governor and the chief burgo-master, they too plainly distinguished in the first the person of Lyderic de Roulemonde, and in the latter that of Claas Claassen.

Lyderic's appearance was splendid as he rode along in the dark pride of power. The plain rough figure of the old tanner

was strikingly contrasted with his ; but there was in both an evident air of swaggering and uneasy effort, in filling the new characters to which they were raised by dishonour and guilt. The pageant moved glittering on—priests, relics, banners, the heads of the various *gulden* or trades, and then the main personages in all the pomp of official accoutrement ; while Renault and Theresa stood involuntarily fixed, he with agitated surprise, and she with quiet dread. Had even the way been open for escape, neither had power to stir ; for the natural energy of her character seemed paralysed as by a spell, and his fleeting possession of that faculty, as occasionally evinced on their journey, was quite withered in the influence of his actual situation.

Lyderic's sidelong glance stealing through the crowd, in search of the usual homage to personal advantages and high station, discovered a damning tribute to his influence, in the pale and statute-like features and form of Theresa, fixedly gazing on his basilisk look, and in the flushed confusion of Renault, who had not presence of mind enough to cast his towards the earth. Lyderic betrayed no token of surprise at this discovery. He felt an instant sensation of triumph, on finding Theresa within his reach, accompanied by a pang of mean remorse, at the memory of Beatrice and her scorn. But his countenance showed no change. He bit his lip, and his brow lowered on his unspeaking eyes—but this seemed the trick of habit, rather than the effort of feeling. He looked slightly at young Claassen, whom he had no doubt had willingly led Theresa into his power, and he attributed the youth's confusion to the sight of his father. He coolly turned with some casual observation to the renegade burgomaster, and went on his way to the church, making sure that the son would after the ceremony put him in possession of the hostage whose fate he had had no means of tracing, and whose recovery seemed as a new wave in the tide of success that flowed so rapidly on him.

Now was the moment for Renault Claassen to have fulfilled his mission, by placing Theresa in the holy sanctuary, which not even the power of the governor might dare to violate openly. And had Renault been actuated by only a pure spirit of devotion to her, he would have taken advantage of the time and hastened to the convent. But we have seen that the leaven

of selfish passion was in his heart ; and in the weakness of his nature he clung to the hope of making her his own. He had not the vigour of intellect which sees the crisis when a beloved object *must* be given up, and commands the sacrifice of one's own happiness as essential to the security of hers. He could not imagine the perspective of long years soothed by the pride of such a sacrifice ; but rather than forego another day of lingering dalliance near her, he held her ready for the ruin he had not energy to obviate.

Irresolute, and quailing under the effect of astonishment and apprehension, Renault made no effort to escape from the pressure of the crowd ; and the rapture of feeling that Theresa's passive form was indeed beside him, completed the paralysis of thought, and left him incapable of reflection or reason. As they stood thus, or rather moved with the throng towards the church, which the procession had now entered, its direction suddenly changed, and the living flood was hurried back with reflux force, by the rush of a band of ruffians, armed with hatchets, staves, and lighted brands, who had only waited till the church received the military and civil dignitaries, to effect a purpose which one of them had not only approved but projected.

" To Rozenhoed House ! To Rozenhoed House ! Plunder and burn ! Death to the traitor ! Claas Claassen for ever ! " and various such frantic cries, sounded the key-note of that ever jangling and discordant instrument, the popular voice. Ere time was given for thought or for escape, the well-trained horde swept furiously by, and Theresa could not shut out the view of her paternal home and the chief object of her proud inheritance in flame and smoke, while from every door and window most costly articles were flung out in the fierce rage of sack and rapine.

" Heaven and the holy saints protect my father ! " ejaculated Theresa, with eyes upturned, and her hands crossed on her heaving breast.

" Her father ! " cried some of the crowd, who all seemed to applaud the mischief, with that perverse sympathy in violence and injustice which always actuates masses of men — " Who is her father ? Can she be the gold-beater's daughter ? Is this the traitor's child ? "

These fearful questions and the murmur that arose made

Renault Claassen thrill with dread; and grown cunning by its impulse, he tore off Theresa's mantle and threw it away, at the same instant flinging his own hat and cloak on the ground; and thus less distinguished than before from the plainly or half-dressed artisans around him, he snatched Theresa from the throng and escaped with her, more successfully unnoticed than had they affected concealment or disguise. A few minutes brought them to Tanner's Street. Renault scarcely recognised his father's house, now decorated (and, as he felt, disgraced) with garlands and festoons, while an arch of triumph spanned the street, covered with distichs of damning praise, such as the teeming venality of scribblers holds ready in every age and for the basest men.

Renault interposed his person between Theresa and these trophies of his father's treachery, and led her through a low passage, the door of which was surmounted by a huge effigy of an ox's head, painted to the life, and denoting the craft to which the new chief magistrate belonged. Through this passage they soon reached the tan-yard, where heaps of hides, undressed and clotted with blood, or bleaching by the open pits, and mountains of bark in its dry or saturated state, blocked up the way, and sent out a mixture of putrid and bitter smells. No living thing was to be seen but two huge dogs, whose wooden houses stood at either side the path, and whose chains allowed them just to reach its limits to terrify but not harm the passers, like the growling monsters of a fairy tale. On the present occasion they grinned horrible welcomes to young Renault, howling and rattling their chains as they bounded with ferocious joy. He hurried Theresa through this disgusting scene, and led her into a low pavilion, the old burgher's "bower," overlooking a stagnant canal, the receptacle of all the dregs from the nauseous industry of the neighbourhood.

"Thank Heaven! you are safe and secret here," said Renault, panting, and offering a seat to Theresa.

"And why here?" asked she, in a faint and faltering voice. But her companion, not less moved by the now unusual sound of that voice, whose tones thrilled through him, than confused at the simple question it uttered, was in his turn unable to reply.

"Why not lead me to my convent?" asked Theresa, as if the words were expressed with a painful effort.

Renault stammered a sentence, of which she could just distinguish "danger, crowd, De Roulemonde," vaguely combining to make out a case of urgency for her present situation; and he then hastily added,—

"But now I fly to see what may be snatched from the ruin of your house—what is there most dear to you that I may attempt to save?"

"My father, my father! think only of him!" exclaimed Theresa. But Renault had no hope of saving him, if he were indeed returned to Bruges, as the shouts of the mob seemed to say. He knew too well the spirit of its factious rabble, to dream of snatching a victim from their fury. He therefore made no answer to Theresa, whom he considered as already fatherless; but fastening the door carefully, and closing the window of the pavilion on the side next the yard, he sallied forth into the street.

For half an hour after his departure, Theresa suffered a revival of that intense anxiety of which for so many past days she had seemed incapable. Her father's supposed danger made her feel as though new-born to the acute distresses of humanity. Confused noises broke on her at times—then a dead pause—then shouts and yells, in each of which she fancied the sentence of his death. Remorse at having ever for a moment suffered other feelings to overpower her affection for him, added new torments to her suspense; and thus worked up almost to frenzy, she at length resolved to attempt an escape from the pavilion, and rush at once into the streets, to know and brave the worst that could befall.

Finding the door fast, she looked from the window that opened on the canal, to see if any means of egress were likely in that direction; and with a thrill of pleasure, she discovered on the opposite side Jans Broeklaer, unmooring a little boat from the wall that bounded a straggling waste ground through which he had made his way. He cast across the canal a reconnoitring but terrified glance, and discovered Theresa's agitated face, as she leaned from the window, and imploringly motioned his approach. A strong shove against the wall made the boat dart across, and Jans, springing on the stair that communicated with the pavilion, was, as quick as fear could

urge him, within the open window, and crouching low in a corner.

A few words of explanation told that he had been recognised in the streets as a follower of Van Rozenhoed, had seen the house in flames, escaped from the fury of the mob, and letting the horses adrift among them, made the best of his way by an indirect route to his rendezvous with Renault Claassen. Theresa lost no time in idle questions. She saw that the man was scarcely coherent in thought or words. Once more then her native spirit, still unsubdued by suffering, prompted her to immediate and independent action.

"Come," cried she, "follow me; I go to seek my father!"

In a moment she had passed from the window upon the platform from which the flight of stone steps led to the canal. The bewildered Broeklaer scarcely comprehended her words or her purpose. But a new alarm urged his obedience to her call, for the terrific howlings of the two mastiffs in the yard without announced the approach of some one — and who is not dangerous to a coward's imagining? While Jans still hesitated and trembled, the unwieldy workmanship of the door fastenings began to play outside; and then he sprang out of the window, and hurried down the stair after Theresa. The door of the pavilion opened: a rapid foot was heard on the floor, and then a bound from the window, betokening immediate pursuit. Theresa reached the lower step; and preparing to throw herself into the little boat, she saw with a pang of despair that it had floated down the canal, and was quite beyond her reach. In another instant she was clasped in the arms of Renault Claassen, while poor Broeklaer, at the sight of an active pursuer, had closed his eyes, and put up his hands in silent solicitings for mercy.

Renault bore his recovered prize to the pavilion again, and, shutting the door, he threw himself on his knees before her, seized her hand, and exclaimed, in a scarce articulate voice, —

"Best, and most adored being, this is the crisis of my fate and of yours. I have reached the height of daring, in the fear of having lost you. Now, then, let me speak! De Roulemonde comes to snatch you from me — can you submit to such a fate? There is but one way, one moment for escape — will you fly with me?"

"Yes, to my father's arms — or to the convent's shelter."

“No, no, Theresa, it is now too late—it must be with me, for me alone—far from this terrible place. Of your father I can learn nothing—I fear the worst! The convent is utterly beyond your reach—the road is filled by Roulemonde and his creatures—the moment gone by. I have, with two steady friends, secured fresh horses—the gates are open—the way is wide—I am provided with all means—you must, you will be mine! This is no time to hesitate—fly with me, Theresa, and be happy.”

“Happy!” exclaimed the astonished yet indignant girl—“happy with another—with *you*, while *his* image lives and breathes in my heart! Stand back, sir, and let me pass! Oh God! Is there, then, no faith, no honour in mortal man!”

Thus speaking, she walked with an air of resistless dignity out into the yard, where Broeklaer, who had stood there trembling, intuitively followed her steps. The young tanner, dashed at once from the height of hope and daring to which he had rashly ventured, also followed her, like the culprit of the eastern tale, doomed to move as the shadow of the bright spirit he had dared to love. He was utterly paralysed by her one short phrase, her one brief look. His horses were ready—his friends prepared—his mind, as he believed, made up—yet he dared not act. In such a crisis it is only a bold breach of decorum that suits the lover’s need—an ardent violence, which may shock at first, but which may be atoned for by the force of the passion that at once emboldens and subdues him. But Renault Claassen was not suited for such passages of life and love.

Theresa walked safely past the dogs, who gazed surlily but mutely on her. She cleared the passage; and just as she reached the street, she saw before her, and was at once discovered by De Roulemonde and Claas Claassen, as they returned from the thanksgiving in all the pomp of their respective state. Lyderic immediately dismounted from his horse, and all glittering in finery, he stalked with a haughty step to Theresa and took her by the hand, while the variety of her agitation left her scarce power to attempt its removal from his grasp.

“Why here, my fair fugitive? The governor’s palace were more fitting,” said he with the insolence of pride—“and you, my trusty agent,” he continued, as Renault ap-

peared, "how is this? Is this filthy den of stinking trade the place where you should have led my affianced bride?"

While Theresa glowed with all the revived force of indignation, at what appeared in her state of misery and destitution but a cold-blooded mockery, Claas Claassen seeing his son, and stung by the insulting epithets applied by the governor to his beloved tan-yard, spurred his heavy gelding, and cried out impetuously,—

"What is all this? Eh, Renault, are you as weak a fool as ever? Why do you stand so sneakingly? Where have you been? How came you back here — and with this young woman too? I knew well you might have her whom you liked, in spite of all the upstart pretenders of Brabant. Come, my young damsel, although the daughter of a condemned traitor, you need fear nothing while under the protection of the burgomaster of Bruges, who will suffer no harm to his son's mistress."

Theresa shrunk from the protection so brutally offered, while Lyderic, looking infinite contempt at the old burgher, calmly struck a perfumed and embroidered glove in the face of the shuffling animal on which he was mounted, and exclaimed, —

"Halloa! Has the beast no better manners than to press against the representative of the Lord's anointed? Must the governor be trampled on by such clumsy hoofs?"

Old Claas, who rode no better than tanners or tailors usually do, made violent efforts to hold firm in his seat, as the horse plunged back into the crowd, and then forward again, to escape the various blows struck on his flanks in self-defence by those whom he incommoded. Sundry of the tipstiffs, halberdiers, and other civic attendants, rushed round to the rescue of the chief magistrate, who now vociferated loudly, and desperately struggled to fling himself *out* of his saddle, for he saw that the insolent governor was coolly carrying his point, by bearing off the disputed prize. Lyderic, as soon as he threw the burgomaster into such disorder, and never relinquishing his hold of Theresa's hand, ordered one of his aides-de-camp to bring forward the huge and gilded official carriage of state, which followed close behind in the order of the procession. This was performed in a moment, the coachman proudly whipping on

the cumbrous steeds, who slashed their long tails about, and threw double confusion into the crowd. In a moment Lyderic and a couple of his officers placed Theresa in the carriage. He was on the point of stepping in after her, when old Claas, foaming with rage, bustled on foot through the crowd, striking at all sides with his truncheon of state, and leaving behind various fragments of his robes of office, which the dense assemblage unwittingly tore from his back.

"Hold! stop! desist!" cried he, with all his might, and seizing Lyderic by one arm. "In the name of the city rights, I command you to deliver up that young woman! She is a citizen's daughter—herself a free denizen! Privilege! privilege! Bruges and our rights! Up, citizens, with staves, bills, and battle-axes! Privilege! privilege!"

Lyderic coolly answered this tirade by a contemptuous sneer, and a push, which flung the obstreperous burgomaster sprawling under his own triumphal arch.

"Guards, do your duty! I shall settle with this traitor anon! Drive on!" said the governor, drawing close round the gilded yellow leather curtains of his vehicle; and the four indigenous horses, obeying the lash, flung their unpatriotic hoofs most remorselessly through the astounded throng that filled the narrow street.

"Privilege, privilege!" cried the struggling burgomaster.

"Bruges and our rights!" snuffled the old beadle of St. Donat's.

"Staves, bills, and battle-axes!" stuttered a couple of the journeymen hide-wetters, who lifted their master on his legs. But no sympathy was excited in the crowd for the degraded dignitary, who was looked on but as a heretic, a renegade, and a rebel, even by the party he had joined. Besides, public feeling was dead—the true patriots were broken, imprisoned, and powerless—the rabble were all the creatures of priestcraft and tyranny—and Bruges was lost! The frowning and ferocious looks of the governor's Spanish guards completed the indignities he had so scornfully begun. They drove away the citizens, and even forced the chief magistrate to seek the shelter of his tan-yard, to which he was conducted, or rather dragged, by Renault and two of his other sons, who were angry but impotent witnesses of the scene.

A few minutes sufficed to bring the governor's coach of

state close up to the main entrance of his palace, in the square called the Bourg. Theresa had little time to recal her scattered thoughts. But while she was lifted out by Lyderic, and carried over the threshold of the house of state, her eye caught a view of the gilded statues of saints and martyrs which filled the numerous niches of its florid front, and she fervently sent up to Heaven an inward prayer for protection.

Lyderic, placing his burden on her feet again, made his way through the files of guards and lacqueys which thronged the entrance hall, staircase, and lobbies; and never quitting the firm clasp with which he hurried her along, he at last reached the door of that same chamber where we first introduced Don Juan de Trovaldo to the notice of our readers. He opened the door unceremoniously, although the room was occupied. For at the balconied window, which our readers may remember, stood the figure of a man, whose agitated gestures spoke the grief with which he gazed on the pillage and destruction still going forward in Rozenhoed House and gardens, which that window so completely overlooked. The noise of Lyderic's entrance made him turn round — when, with simultaneous exclamations of astonishment and joy, he rushed towards Theresa and she towards him, and in a moment both father and daughter were clasped in a reciprocal embrace.

Lyderic then left his astonished prisoners to the free indulgence of their mutual revelations. Following his example, we shall, for awhile, quit them too; but content ourselves for the present with tracing his proceedings only to the private closet whence he issued his official orders. The most immediate of those now given, was one for the instant arrest of the burgomaster and his sons. In this moment of concussion between the civil and military powers, he knew the advantage of promptness: he also knew his man, and the grounds on which he himself acted. The order despatched by a competent force to put down all popular resistance, he immediately penned a short account of the measures to his confidential patron Don Zeronimo Zaputa. But before the ink of this secret epistle was dry, the officer returned with the intelligence that old Claassen and his four sons had every one already fled, and were seen on fleet horses, with a couple of

attendants, all carrying saddle-bags which rattled with the chink of specie, and escaping from the city on the road to Antwerp.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE time had now arrived for the great effort so long in contemplation by the States General of Holland, which was to give to the war a totally new character, reverse the positions of the contending parties, and put the tyrannous assailants of freedom upon the defence of their most vital possessions.

While every thing that had so lately occurred seemed to promise a campaign in the eastern extremities of the contending provinces, the preparations of Holland and the energy of Prince Maurice were directed to the object of a rapid and vigorous invasion poured into the very heart of Flanders. All that had passed in Brabant, the reduction of the fortresses, the gaining over the mutineers, and the military demonstrations on the Meuse, were but stratagems to blind the archdukes to the real project in view ; and the first success was commensurate with the sagacity that planned and the talent that performed the whole.

In the very latter days of June, the fleet and troops intended for the grand expedition were secretly assembled in the Island of Walcheren ; and ere the month had expired, the invading army landed at Philippine, a small fort two leagues from Ghent, and were instantly put in motion.

Prince Maurice found himself at the head of full eighteen thousand infantry and two thousand horse, a powerful force for the object in view, and a large one for the style of warfare carried on in this memorable contest. Smaller bodies of men were more generally brought into the field, and detached on services that presented but miniature likenesses of the grander features of war : sieges of towns, surprises of forts, skirmishes of cavalry, were the usual forms of operations ; but the crash of large masses of men in pitched battle, so often heard in the Low Countries in modern times, rarely resounded through them in those days of yore. The evolutions of war had a

narrow theatre for display ; and talents and armies were alike frittered away in detail.

Conflicts between the most renowned generals were mere trials of *skill*, mechanical efforts, which small minds might accomplish and even excel in. But the grand concussions of *genius*, which none but mighty intellects can direct, were seldom or never known. Even Maurice and Albert, and the other contemporary captains, had few opportunities of passing those cramped and narrow limits. The former had successfully conducted upwards of twenty sieges, but had never fought more than one action to which even courtesy could give the title of a battle : the affair of Turnhout, in 1557, gained by eight hundred cavalry. The operations which we have now rapidly to sketch formed one of the exceptions, and give a bolder and more stimulating picture of warfare than almost any event of the time ; while the vigour and the acuteness almost equally displayed by the rival commanders, make us hesitate whether to bind the palm of merit round the brow of the victor or the vanquished. But in the celebrated fight which closed these operations, and even in battles of much greater magnitude, we cannot fail to be struck with the insignificance of the instruments which work out the destinies of the world. And we scarcely know which most to marvel at — the vastness of the results so often produced on millions of men and for a long lapse of years, by the sacrifice of a few thousands and the events of one day ; or the littleness of mankind, that can be so affected by a pigmy band, scarce enough to make a handful in the grasp of time.

The first movement of Prince Maurice was directed towards Bruges. He came within sight of the place, in the full expectation of its opening its gates and receiving him as a deliverer. But the events already described put a fatal negative upon his hopes, while they confirmed the sagacity with which he had almost predicted the consequences of faction upon the citizens of that and the other towns of Flanders. As the army defiled almost under the walls, and nearly within the range of the guns, several shots were fired from them ; and accompanying shouts from the Spanish garrison and their slavish partisans, told the invaders that they had now fairly entered the confines of an enemy's country.

Prince Maurice was deeply disappointed, but not for one

moment embarrassed by this. He entered into instant consultation with the deputies of the States, who still accompanied him, less as commissioners to contravene his plans than as representatives of the republic to sanction and identify his proceedings. An immediate advance on the town of Nieuport, the original object of the expedition, was resolved on; and three or four small forts in the neighbourhood of Bruges were taken without resistance, and amply garrisoned, to prove a check to any movements which the enemy might make in his rear. The progress of the army was quite without obstruction. No enemy appeared in arms; and the whole face of the country was deserted even by the peasants, who fled in every direction to the woods, guided by their priests, who filled them with fears of the heretic invaders.

In a few days the fleet, with provisions and the requisite munitions of war, appeared off the coast, and safely entered the harbour of Ostend, furnishing the army with abundance of supplies. On the last day of June, the Count of Solms, commanding Prince Maurice's advanced guard, invested Nieuport, having previously taken some forts close to the harbour of the town; and the prince himself broke up his camp at Oudenbourg the following morning, and proceeded with his whole army to commence the operations of the siege.

In the whole progress of the expedition the prince was closely attended by, and paid a marked attention to one young officer, a stranger to every other individual of the army, but one not unknown to our readers. It was Count Ivon de Bassenvelt, who, by a series of manœuvres that obtained him the highest praise, had safely conducted the remnant of his regiment, with the few women, and his hostage the Provost of Flanders, through the various dangers of their retreat, and had joined the prince on the day after that on which De Grimberghe had quitted him with Theresa under his escort. We cannot stop to recount the various emotions caused by De Bassenvelt's unhoped-for appearance; nor those which he endured, of delight, and then of disappointment bordering on despair, on learning first that Theresa was safe, and next, that she was snatched by fate once more from almost his very grasp.

Arnoul de Grimberghe, a few hours after he had parted from his charge on the confines of the territory of Bruges,

met a single warrior riding furiously along, on a horse of rare beauty. A line from Prince Maurice certified that it was De Bassenvelt, and authorised De Grimberghe to reconduct Theresa to his rendezvous in the island of Walcheren, if such was her pleasure on speaking with the bearer of his billet. De Bassenvelt, on finding that she was indeed ere then in Bruges, resolved, at all hazards, to pursue her into the very city. De Grimberghe had nought to say to this wild object. He saw he was not a man to be dictated to, and that his state of feeling would not admit of even reasoning. He therefore saw him depart as though he were a man totally lost—and such he most probably would have been, had fate destined him to fulfil his purpose. He turned by a cross-road well known to him to enter the city by the Antwerp gate. But ere he reached it, he encountered the refugee family of Claassen, flying as for life and death. A scene not necessary now to detail—short, pithy, and decisive—took place between them; and before their half-blown horses had time to recover breath, they were all again in full speed, with their backs to Bruges. While the burgomaster and his sons continued their route to Antwerp, De Bassenvelt pursued that by which De Grimberghe and his party journeyed, and in due time he overtook them, and rejoined the patriot army, ready for any deed that desperation might point to. The prince cheered him for several days with the prospect of his entering Bruges in triumph, and snatching Theresa from the power of Lyderic, of whose new appointment and late doings he had heard from Renault Claassen. The failure of these hopes but added to his mental torture; and taking comfort only in his despair, he now but wished to do his duty to his country, heedless of his peculiar fate. The regiment of black chasseurs, now mustering barely four hundred effective men, took a distinguished place among the cavalry of the army, and were looked on with peculiar consideration, as well from their celebrity as from being the only mounted regiment of Walloons in either service.

And now came the time when the Archduke Albert, and his not less heroic spouse, showed a boldness and vigour that proved them worthy of the empire at stake, and of being opposed, hand and head, to the most consummate general and the wisest people of Europe. Intelligence of the invasion, and the passage of the Dutch army, sped like wildfire from

Bruges to Brussels, and the archdukes burst from their apparent listlessness to meet the perilous event.

Bruges was fixed on for the head-quarters of the sovereigns, and incredible efforts made to collect an army there. Mendoza, admiral of Arragon, Count Frederic de Berg, Velasco, general of artillery, La Berlotte, Zapena, and other officers of note, rushed to the rendezvous. The garrison of Ghent, Bruges, and the other towns of Flanders, were in a few days assembled, and the mutinous Spaniards of Diest, an important force, forgetting their grievances in this vital crisis, hurried to range themselves again in the royal ranks. Scarcely a week before, it did not seem possible for the archdukes to muster four thousand men. On the 30th of June they passed in review, in a plain between Ghent and Bruges, fourteen thousand as gallant veterans as ever took the field. This army was, as usual, composed of Spaniards, Italians, Walloons, and some Irish; all catholics, mostly bigots, and individually, or in the mass, ready to shed their heart's blood for the cause of royalty and religion.

As the ranks stood in firm array, Albert and Isabella, mounted on their war-steeds, and followed by a numerous train, rode along the front. When they reached the centre of the line, where the now repentant but lately mutinous Spaniards had their post, they suddenly stopped; and Isabella, noble in mien, and of intrepid spirit (who only wanted as large a field to have been as great a sovereign as her contemporary, Elizabeth of England), spoke to her soldiers in the following words:—

“Comrades! you could not be called on to fight for a juster cause than mine. Veterans, who have so often bled in these wars, you know the enemy you have to oppose. What has not the king my father done to bring back these rebels to their duty? What would not my royal brother sacrifice to abate their fury? Nothing can satisfy their guilty passions. It is not the yoke of their legitimate masters they would shake off—but they would spurn our holy faith, and defy the true God! Heresy is their idol, and the ruin of religion their aim. But, relying on your bravery, I reckon on a certain triumph in the contest, and your reward is already registered in Heaven. Be certain also of all that earthly gratitude can ensure you. My husband, my brother, and myself, will wear your

services in our hearts' memory. Every hour I expect large sums of gold from Spain. My faithful states of Flanders and Brabant will forthwith pour out considerable subsidies. And I swear to you, on my royal faith, and by the kingly blood that fills my veins, that every jewel I possess—ay, to these glittering baubles that hang from my ears, shall be sacrificed and sold to meet your wants !”

Shouts, such as enthusiastic thousands are wont to send out, interrupted this harangue. A few words from Albert told the excited veterans that he now joined his fate with theirs, to hazard both empire and life, and fight to the last gasp at their head. And finding it impossible, even were it politic, to arrest their half frantic impetuosity, he at once drew his sword, gave the order to march, and in an instant more he was in advance on the direct route to Nieuport, followed by this imposing, and, as he felt sure, invincible force.

By the next evening, all the forts in the neighbourhood, so easily taken and now garrisoned by Maurice a few days before, fell before the irresistible attack of the royal army, and those who vainly resisted their assault were every man put to the sword.

In the course of that night, the 1st of July, Prince Maurice had intelligence of these almost incredible movements. The news came like a thunderbolt on the patriot army. But before day-break, a detachment, consisting of two thousand infantry, almost all Scotch, and some squadrons of cavalry, with whom were De Bassenvelt and his scanty regiment, all under the command of Count Ernest of Nassau, were pushed forward to secure two bridges, which crossed a river of inconsiderable breadth near fort Albertus, and where a stand might have been made, to enable the main army to prepare for the attack which so unexpectedly threatened it. But when this brave advance reached the post, they found it already occupied by the indefatigable archduke, and they were in a moment involved in a contest with the entire royalist force. Notwithstanding the most determined bravery, the infantry were borne down by numbers, and almost annihilated. Eight hundred of the brave Scotch were killed on the spot, including eleven captains, and a still greater number of inferior officers. Several hundred were wounded and made prisoners ; and at length Count Ernest, with De Bassenvelt and a few other

officers, regained the besieging army with the remains of the cavalry, and pursued by the whole of the victorious enemy.

As the royalists advanced to consummate the work they had begun, Albert despatched to Isabella, at Bruges, an account of the defeat of "the rebels" advanced guard, and an assurance that in a few hours they would be entirely destroyed; and ere noon, the bells of Bruges, and the surrounding villages, rang out loud peals of triumph for the news.

When the intelligence reached Maurice, he was busily employed in forming his troops in order of battle, to encounter the shock which he had such reason now to expect. He was not one moment daunted by what he heard; but continued his manœuvres with renewed activity and unmoved coolness. The advanced guard of his army, consisting of the English and the Ferisons, under the command of Sir Francis Vere, soon occupied their position on the left, close touching on the sea. The main body, made up of the French, Walloons, and Swiss, soon formed in battalions, headed by Count Everard de Solms, in the very heart of the sand-hills which composed the soil of this memorable battle-field. The cavalry, under Count Louis of Nassau, was on the right, or in parts distributed through various divisions. Van den Tempel had charge of the rear-guard. Prince Maurice took no particular station; but, with his brilliant suite, many of them formerly named, was, during the course of the eventful day, in every possible point of the fight.

While these dispositions went on, the archduke advanced, with all the cautious activity of a good general. Restraining the impatience of his flushed battalions, he brought them about two o'clock to a halt within view of Nieuport, their friendly town, and Ostend, the only port in Flanders then in possession of the patriots. The nature of the ground concealed the position of Prince Maurice and his army, and allowed no opportunity for reconnoitring. At this period the archduke summoned all his general officers to an immediate council, under the coarse canopy thrown up upon a few stakes hastily thrust into the sandy soil. A large drum-head for a table, and some small barrels of powder for seats, formed the furniture of the rude tent in which this important, and indeed immortal, debate was held.

"Generals, veterans, comrades!" said Albert, when they

were assembled, while the troops, in their whole line of halt, stretched their limbs on the sand, and hastily swallowed their last rations — to many of them their last meal — “ Friends, let me have your counsel ! Shall we now march forward to the charge ? ”

Every one curbed his impatience of reply, while Gaspard Zapena, an old Spaniard, his grey hairs and wrinkled brow vouching for two-thirds of a century’s experience, rose and deliberately spoke.

“ My prince ! ” said he, looking with firm respect on the archduke, “ we have yet an hour to march before we can engage the rebel lines. Our gallant troops are still but men, and the work this morning done has already fatigued them. We know not yet the enemy’s position. The superiority of numbers is surely on his side. But let your highness take the advantage which Heaven has thrown into your hands, and the victory must be yours. Your vigorous movements have utterly surprised this so much vaunted foe. A victorious force in front, a hostile town behind him, he must retreat. Let him do so ! He has but two routes to choose — the sea or the land. By land he can only seek shelter in Ostend, which must speedily fall before our arms. If he flies by sea, we attack him in his confusion, and he must infallibly be destroyed ! ”

Several stood up as the venerable warrior resumed his place, but none could get the first word from the impetuous La Barlotte, all order of seniority being overlooked in the urgent excitement of the scene. A second Sempronius in point of council, but stanch and honest in his allegiance and opinions, this fiery Walloon, a true soldier of fortune, exclaimed in a loud voice, with glowing cheeks and burning looks —

“ Prince, Generals ! for the sake of our cause, for religion’s sake, in the name of the saints, let not this unworthy though sincere advice prevail ! Shame on our names for ever if we let slip the glory that courts our grasp ! Terrified and trembling — his forts torn from him, his advanced guard annihilated, frozen with dread, the dastard enemy will at our approach fly in disorder to his ships, and fall an unresisting prey ! Our troops cry out for the order to advance — will you let this ardour cool ? March, march, without a moment’s further pause ! With our sovereign at our head, what can

resist our attack? Oh, do not by hesitation put off the hour of triumph, turn into ice our soldiers' boiling blood, and give the accursed foe the glory that Heaven has already decreed to us!"

A shout of approval was the answer to this appeal. The soldiers without, who waited the result of the council in trembling anxiety, echoed the cry and sprang again to their arms; and from one end of the line to the other nothing was heard but exclamations to be led on, and oaths that not a man of the rebel force should have quarter, but Maurice and his brother — and these only to be dragged in triumph at the tail of the archduke's horse!

Yet, in spite of all these demonstrations, Albert still balanced in his choice of measures. His natural temperament, schooled in the wily tact of Philip, his uncle, father-in-law, and patron, leant towards caution; but his courageous sagacity told him there was a tide in the affairs of men, collectively as well as singly — and still the commands to stand fast or to advance struggled for utterance on his lips, and were watched with fierce anxiety by those around him. Chance decided, as it so often does, the destiny of the day and the fate of thousands.

Albert held in his hand one of those marvellously-considered instruments, then newly invented, but imperfectly formed, by Zachary Jansen of Middlebourg, called a telescope. While the archduke's mind rapidly took a view of his situation, his eye was applied to the instrument, with which there were few others in his army sufficiently acquainted to know the right from the wrong end. Suddenly he started with unwonted vivacity, dashed the glass from his hand, drew his sword, and cried out,—

"Blessed be the holy saints — they fly! their fleet is in full sail for Ostend! Sound trumpets! Forward! In the name of the Virgin and the Trinity! Forward to Victory!"

Another moment saw him on his horse again, heading the ardent columns, which moved on, in two divisions of infantry, preceded and flanked by the horse, while the whole disposable force of artillery was dispersed in the intervals in four brigades.

As soon as Prince Maurice had safely passed his army from under the walls of Nieuport, across the river which they

were luckily enabled to ford, the tide being low, and seen them fairly occupying their positions, he called all his staff around him, among whom were the several young noblemen before enumerated, scarcely any of them of superior age to his own dearly-loved brother, Frederick Henry.

"My brother!" said Maurice, — with a feeling and consideration which render that passing moment one of the most interesting in all the records of war — "My brother, and my young friends all, we touch on a terrible hour. The battle about to be fought will be one of life and death. No quarter can be expected from our ferocious enemy. For my part, I must conquer or leave my body on these sands. Honour forbids the possibility of flight to me and my troops, and if we die, we die covered with fame. But you, in the spring of life and youth, are not forced by any duty to brave the brunt of such a scene. The tide comes up fast — the ships are afloat — I have given orders for every one to weigh anchor, and set sail far from the shore, so that no chance of escape can be left for a single man. The deputies are about to embark; you are now all free to join them, and take shelter in Ostend, to wait for happier days — to welcome us in victory — or to avenge our fate. Go, my brother — but give me one embrace — then lead your gallant friends — and my love and blessing be on your head!"

The hero turned aside his face — for in the weakness of true manhood he was ashamed of its noblest emotions.

"Death, death, a thousand times before shame!" cried Frederick Henry, waving his helmet above his head, and seizing his brother's hand, which returned his grasp with more than a brother's force.

"Death or Victory!" exclaimed in a chorus of valour the young lords; and many a sober head was for a moment intoxicated by the inspiring sound.

"Be it so! be it so! every man to his post!" said Maurice; and away he flew with his enthusiastic attendants, and soon seemed to be at once in every part of the field.

"They come!" said he at length, pausing near the centre of the positions, and turning to the troops — "and now, my gallant fellow soldiers, a word or two to your bold hearts. I confess to you I have been surprised! I thought that the forts would have resisted any force the enemy could bring against

me until Nieuport had fallen into my hands. Fate has deceived me — but our rash assailants are resolved that we shall conquer fate itself. A day's delay on their part had been our inevitable ruin. But see, they come madly on, to save us from disgrace and give us victory! Blinded with hatred and bloated with pride, they are rushing to their own destruction. Meet them, then, like men — show that you are not daunted by this morning's check. Remember how often we have fought and bled together! You shall see me every where that danger or duty points to. Let us all to-day prove ourselves worthy of each other, and of the glorious cause we serve. Look yonder at those vessels — they are already far beyond our reach! Now on the enemy — he is just within our grasp! One final word — we must conquer or die!”

Ere a shout could answer him, Maurice was once more out of sight, bounding across the sand-hills, placing the artillery, haranguing some regiments, fixing others in position — in all things surpassing his almost unlimited reputation. He left nothing undone to secure success. He had planks brought from the ships, to form platforms under his cannon, and steady their fire. He chose his position with the wind and sun in rear; and then with a serene front he awaited the attack.

The armies were as nearly as possible equal; the garrisons of the forts, the losses of the morning, and the troops necessary to keep those of Nieuport in check, reducing Prince Maurice's force to a close level with Albert's. Thus then began this regular pitched battle.

“Soldiers!” said Albert, just a moment before the shock commenced, “remember that you fight for God, the king, the archduchess, and for me.”

In the next instant the Spanish cavalry under Mendoza charged on the right, along the strand between the downs and the approaching tide. The advance under Vere met the charge; and a battery raised just above them on the sand-hills poured in upon the assailants, and soon threw them into disorder. But then the royalist advanced guard, headed by the mutineers of Diest, rushed forward through the downs, and pressing on the English and French infantry, turned the fortune of the fight. Column after column came on. The gallant Vere was already badly wounded, and his troops driven back in partial disorder. But his brother Horace took his place, rallied the broken ranks,

and recovered his ground. Prince Maurice seeing all that passed, now sent forward Count Everard de Solms with the Walloon and Swiss foot, at the same moment that he ordered Louis of Nassau to charge with the chief force of cavalry. They were met by two battalions of Spaniards and Italians, under Zapena, and Don Alphonso Avalos. It was then the fight became general, pikes and swords clashing against helm and cuirass, and the fortune of the day hanging for awhile in total doubt.

Albert now seeing the decisive moment arrive, advanced at the head of his reserve with La Berlotte, De Bucquoi, the main body of the infantry, and all his artillery. As he marched on, he might have been supposed some crusading chief leading his fanatic bands against the followers of Mahomet; for the rich standards of embroidered silk which floated round him bore only such devices as, a figure of the Virgin in a sun of gold, with various moons and stars, and the motto *Benedicta tu in mulieribus*; or Christ on the Cross, in all the lively colours of painting, and a scroll with these words, *Adoramus te, Christe, et benedicimus tibi*; and many others, all at variance with existing notions of taste in matters of modern warfare.

The conflict which followed this movement was terrific. Maurice, too, perceived that every thing depended on its issue, and promptly moved forward Van den Tempel with the entire rear-guard, excepting a few squadrons of cavalry, including De Bassenvelt's Walloons, which he kept with him in all his own movements, as a last resource for the final moment, to leave one chance of turning the doubtful scale of war.

While the battle raged with its hottest fury, De Bassenvelt, De Grimberghe, and the others nearest the prince, who galloped from the centre towards the right, observed a man in the dress of a soldier, but unarmed, fall suddenly down at the shady side of a sand-hill, as a cannon bullet from the enemy's lines almost smothered him with dust, and as they thought killed him.

"*Pulvis et umbra!*"—exclaimed Cornelius van der Gobble, for it was he—and young De Grimberghe, who had learned Latin at the Royal College of Brussels, and knew his man, patched up the quotation with,

"—— *fruges consumere nati!*" as he galloped hastily on; while Van der Gobble, rolling about as if in violent contortions

of agony, literally buried himself in the sand, his last words heard by the observers being,

“*Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori.*”

Several flying jokes were cracked on the subject of “the lank commissioner’s” scratching his own grave, and the patriot aptness of his dying quotation. And some told the rest, who marvelled at his being in such a place, that he had avowedly debated on the chance of being killed in the battle, or dying of famine in Ostend, and deciding that the former was the less horrible fate, he borrowed an old cuirass and helmet, and, equipped in them, had quietly sat down on the sand-hill, keeping as nearly as possible out of range of shot from the Spanish army at one side, and the garrison of Nieuport at the other, who had attacked the rear of the position, and kept the patriots between a double fire.

The armies had now been engaged for three hours of incessant fighting. The fluctuations of chance as to final success were many; but the masterly arrangements of Maurice had given his troops advantages to balance the enemy’s confidence of victory (which so often fulfils its own prophecy), under the inspiration of which they fought. The setting sun glared fiercely in their faces, and dazzled their sight, while a brisk wind carried the smoke and sand into their eyes; and the superior steadiness of the patriot artillery on their wooden platform enabled almost every gun to take unerring aim. Still the royalists were gaining ground, borne up against all obstacles by the presence of Albert, who was seen in the midst of the mêlée, his casque thrown away, that he might be the better distinguished. Maurice, too, was continually in the hottest of the fight, personal safety being nothing, compared to the stake for which both commanders played their desperate game.

At this instant the prince saw with keen anguish that his glorious kinsman, Louis of Nassau, with about a dozen followers, was surrounded by a considerable body of the enemy’s lancers, and fighting hand to hand against many assailants.

“On, on to the rescue, brave Walloons! Forward, De Bassenvelt! Nassau, to the rescue!” exclaimed Maurice, dashing sword in hand at the head of the small troop, still followed closely by his staff, and soon coming once more to

blows. De Bassenvelt, keeping his eye steadily fixed on Count Louis' orange plume, and mounted on Rolando, full of spirit and activity, soon outstripped the rest. He darted among the enemy, who fled as the reinforcement came on, and ere they had fought their way up, he was safely covering the almost exhausted count's retreat.

And then his eye suddenly turned on the most glorious prize of the battle. Albert was himself almost within his lance's reach ! In a moment De Bassenvelt was before him, and the gallant archduke, with his raised rapier prepared for the coming assault. De Bassenvelt held his well-proved lance once more in rest ; and aiming full at the archduke's unvisored face, he struck his spurs into Rolando's side, and in the bound his lance wounded Albert in the right cheek and ear. De Bassenvelt wheeled round, grappled him, and dragged him to the ground ; but the rush of the surrounding enemy forced him to quit his hold. The archduke remained on foot ; and his horse fled wildly through the field, scattering consternation in the belief that his noble rider was slain.

This event was decisive of the battle. The archduke's disappearance shook the courage of his bravest soldiers ; and Prince Maurice, seizing the decisive moment, ordered an advance of his whole line. The victory was in that moment complete. The broken royalists fled in every direction, abandoning standards, artillery, and baggage, and leaving the field covered with dead. Historians, as usual, differ as to the number of slain, varying in their estimate from three thousand to seven thousand. The veteran Zapena, as brave in battle as he was wise in council, was killed, with the colonels Avalos and Bastock, the first an Italian, the last an Irishman, and many of lesser rank. La Barlotte and Bucquoi were wounded. Mendoza, d'Avilla, and several of rank, were made prisoners. The very doctor and page of the archduke, with all his personal paraphernalia, fell into the hands of the victors. In short, almost every officer in the defeated army was killed or wounded, and upwards of three hundred taken prisoners. Had Maurice, like Joshua, been able to make the sun stand still for one little hour, not a single man had escaped. But the great prize so nearly in his reach succeeded in saving himself. Albert gained another horse, and fled in all haste towards Bruges, accompanied by the Duke d'Aumale, and a

few other men of rank. De Bassenvelt never lost sight of him till the darkness was complete ; and even then he followed the sounds of his horse's hoofs to the very gates of Bruges, accompanied by two cavaliers, who had attended him closely throughout the arduous day, and about fifty of his faithful chasseurs, all who were in a condition to keep pace with the fierce pursuit.

Prince Maurice halted his army on the ground so bloodily fought for and won. His own quarters were taken up in a tent close to the little church of Westende ; and there he at length sat down to such a supper as might be hastily procured, with those of his gallant friends who survived the fight, and Mendoza, and other prisoners of rank, with whom he shared his soldier's fare.

CHAPTER XIV.

WE must now return to the governor's palace at Bruges ; and (while De Bassenvelt and his band follow the flying archduke in hot pursuit) condense in a brief recital the results of a week's anxious discussion between Theresa and her father. When Lyderic left them together, locked in each other's arms, and scarcely believing the reality of their mutual safety, they forgot that all the perils they had escaped were nothing in comparison to that which now beset them. Misfortune may at times be shut out from the mind ; guilt, never ; for the first is extraneous, the latter a part of one's self. It was thus that Van Rozenhoed and his daughter in the joy of the moment lost sight of their actual situation, nor did the conduct of Lyderic tend to break the charm. He left them long and frequently to themselves, treated them with the greatest distinction, and never intruded rudely on them ; but with all the suavity of servile cunning striving to work his way into their favour, he never wore the genuine air of happiness that springs from prosperity unalloyed by remorse. Van Rozenhoed's antipathy was not to yield to the specious hypocrisy of him who held him in the indignity of imprisonment, and whose base object was evident. He had interfered with his autho-

rity to stop the pillage of Rozenhoed House, only to preserve its valuable contents for himself. He threw the whole blame of the outrage on Claas Claassen and his sons. He would have persuaded both father and daughter, that the process of confiscation notoriously going on against their property was a mere matter of form to secure it to them the better, and that his influence made his marriage with Theresa the sure means of security for her fortune and her father's life. And in his frequent interviews, so humbly solicited, and which they could not decline, he never failed to present all these points of argument with the whole subtlety of his character.

Both father and daughter confessed that there was much truth in his insidious statements. But they would have preferred the threatened ruin to the projected union. Van Rozenhoed saw that his property in Bruges was utterly lost ; but he would rather it devolved to the government he detested, than to the individual he despised. For his life he had no fears. He knew that the day of wanton violence was gone by ; and that the exile he had to expect from an ungrateful town was not so terrible a fate as his enemies supposed. Besides, he had a strong presentiment of relief. His confidence in the talents and the friendship of Prince Maurice was extreme ; and with his usual tenacity in matters of hope he clung to the notion that a happy marriage with De Bassenvelt, under the Stadtholder's auspices, was yet to be Theresa's fate. He therefore did not violently regret the overtures of Lyderic, or oppose his daughter's reiterated resolution to bury herself in the convent sanctuary, or die in rejection of all suitors for her hand. Lyderic trusted to his own cringing perseverance and the father's apparent yielding, to effect the great purpose of his pride rather than his love ; while Theresa rested, in a state of comparative tranquillity, in the protection of her father. With a firmness, which proved the depth of her sorrow, she told him of her secret affections and of her lover's loss. It is only shallow regrets that cannot support the mention of their cause. With a fixed eye, pale cheek, and sinking heart, she calmly recounted her short sad tale. Her father listened, and his bosom felt the influence of her recital. He was grieved for her sufferings, but he could not resist a counterpoise of relief that seemed to balance his regret. He remembered Lambert Boonen's doubtful conduct in Brussels,

never thoroughly explained. He now saw the duplicity of which he had been the dupe. And he could not be insensible to the advantage gained to all his prospects, let his fate turn as it might, in being freed from the powerful influence of an ignoble aspirant to his daughter's hand. Lambert Boonen's isolated act of bravery, recounted with broken voice and thrilling emotion by Theresa, appeared to Van Rozenhoed no justification for his presumptuous claim. In fact he was, from the hour of the prince's recommendation, resolved that she should wed De Bassenvelt, and no other suitor had found a chance of favour in his sight, though he had united in himself all the best qualities in which every other individual might excel.

Another source of deep, yet suppressed indignation in Van Rozenhoed's breast, and which he felt powerful enough to decide him, although Lambert Boonen were to rise from his untimely grave, was the memory of the Prior of Saint Andrew's deceitful conduct. To have been made the tool of a priest's cunning and a boy's designs, galled him to the quick, and he could not help dwelling with complacency, at least, on the various reports of Father Wolfert's death, or of a sentence of perpetual imprisonment pronounced against him by the archdukes in council. Such reports he had heard during his sojourn at Brussels; and he did not or would not believe the counter assertion of Lyderic and others of the court minions (anxious to remove any stigma of tyranny from their masters), that the priest had escaped from his cloister by some secret way.

"No," muttered Van Rozenhoed, whenever the thought of this double duplicity crossed him, "never could I have consented to my daughter's mistaken passion — never have suffered myself to be outwitted by the insidious plot! I always had my misgivings, from the hour that the youth was so artfully imposed on me by his wily uncle as my secretary. 'T is well he is now no more, and that I am saved the trouble of breaking poor Theresa's heart. Let her love his memory, as much as she likes and as long as she can! It cannot last! Let her look to a convent till the prospect of its desolate monotony fatigues her mental gaze! Her youth, her sex are not fitted for eternal grief or unsocial seclusion. Better days are in store! Enough is left to make all happy yet! The noble

prince will conquer ; I feel the certainty in my heart. This young hero De Bassenvelt, whom they glorify so highly by proscription and ban, will come to our relief — and liberty for me, and love for Theresa must be our lot at last !”

Thinking thus, Van Rozenhoed bore his captivity well ; nor did he despair even when he saw from his windows the archduke and his veteran troops march out in anticipated triumph on their road to Nieupoort ; yet it may be that his heart did sink, when De Roulemonde, pressing his suit with more than usual ardour, communicated to him and Theresa the first hurried bulletin of the defeat of the patriot vanguard, and when the well known sounds of the city bells gave out their premature peals of triumph. After issuing various orders for rejoicings, and preparations for the reception of the victors, Lyderic again presented himself to Van Rozenhoed and Theresa, and said with haughty tenderness, “ Now, even now, I once more implore your consent to your own happiness. Our cause prevails ; my power increases with each new victory ; the rebels will ere sunset be to a man destroyed, and tomorrow my word will be a sentence of law. The gratitude of the archdukes will be unbounded for what I have done, for the destruction of Welbasch — for the preservation of this city against such a force as came before it. In the hour of glorious triumph, they will be more than ever lavish, and whatever I ask will be mine — increase of rank, new honours, certain wealth ! Think, too, that a word from my lips, a finger raised, may be enough to decide the fate of ye both. But I use no threat — I only supplicate when I might command. Once more reflect ! Full pardon for you, Mynheer van Rozenhoed, it shall be my first demand — ample confirmation of property, reappointment to your dignity — are these no points worth gaining ? and you, Theresa ! — ”

But ere he could recapitulate the advantages he would have held out to her, a new messenger, arriving with breathless haste, and almost forcing his way on the governor's privacy, brought the account of the battle's commencement, and of the first check received by Mendoza's attack. Lyderic treated it with scorn. But another and another confirmed the news ; and almost minute after minute brought still worse intelligence, by the many who were glad to fly the desperate contest to spread terror into the heart of Bruges.

At length came a frightened runaway, with the report that Albert was wounded — another to say he was taken prisoner — a third to swear he was slain. Isabella received all with a stern fortitude worthy a heroine of history. And when at length her husband himself appeared, flying, bleeding, almost alone, to relieve her dread for his life, but confirm her fear for his defeat, she bore up equally against the rush of joy and of grief, and took the road with him to Ghent, cherishing his fainting frame, and cheering his anguished mind.

And now it was that De Roulemond's character betrayed its innate baseness. Bewildered at the sudden reverse; trembling for his vaunted honour, power, and influence; seeing even ruin in a worse aspect than it really wore, he would gladly by an act of double apostacy have abandoned the losing cause — but he dared not, and he knew not how to do it if he dared. Every sinister report increased his alarm and lessened his courage, and brought out in full relief his sordid disposition. His first thought was flight — his next, money. He hurried to the public chest that stood in the cabinet. He filled pocket after pocket, and pouch after pouch with the government gold. He loaded his person with the jewels which adorned the official robes of state. As night came on he issued his last orders, to have every house illuminated so as to favour the fugitive remnants of the army that might make their road through the city. The few soldiers left behind under his command fled like the rest; and when the archduke arrived, passed through, and disappeared, with only delay sufficient to enable his gallant wife to take horse and accompany him, Lyderic, still irresolute whether to abandon Theresa and the hopes connected with her, or attempt to carry her off by force, was in a moment a prisoner in his own palace, and to those of whom of all mankind he could have least supported the power or the presence.

As the furious galloping of horses was heard through the great square, and then in the Bourge, in front of the palace gate, shouts of terrific sound rang in the open hall, and up the vaulted corridors: —

“De Bassenvelt! De Bassenvelt!” said the appalling sounds — scarcely more terrible to the guilty-stricken Lyderic than to her who was the mortal type of purity trembling at his side; Van Rozenhoed alone bounded with joy.

“ I knew it ! ” cried he, rushing towards the door, “ our deliverer comes ! My child, my child, freedom and happiness are at hand ! ”

“ Never, by Heavens ! ” exclaimed Lyderic, seizing Theresa round the waist, and drawing his short sword — “ never shall she be free or happy, if I am not. This is the price of my ransom ! ”

Van Rozenhoed, unarmed as he was, would have rushed on him, but Lyderic put the point of his sword to Theresa’s bosom. The father stood fixed with fear, while Lyderic reached the door, and fastened the many bolts to which tyranny had for ages depended as the security of this last retreat.

In a moment more, violent but vain assaults were made outside — for the iron-plated oak resisted well ; while vociferations were poured forth, in voices that Lyderic recognised as those of his former brother officers. Don Diego Leone M’Intire, now major of the Black Walloons, and a few others, who had survived all perils and followed De Bassenvelt to the last, shouted for admission to the recreant’s den, like a pack of hungry hounds roaring for their prey. Lyderic, summoning up the last dregs of his courage, stood pale and trembling in the midst of the room ; Theresa more dead than alive in his grasp ; and Van Rozenhoed, with clasped hands, looking on, afraid to utter even the prayer that struggled for expression.

But a few instants more ended this scene of torturing suspense. A rustling was heard in the now full-foliaged tree whose branches reached close to the balcony, more violent than that which had alarmed Don Juan de Trovaldo the first night of his appearance in this history. Well might Lyderic turn with instinctive terror towards the sound. It was De Bassenvelt himself, who, having flung away cuisses, cuirass, and casque, and trusting to his active limbs, stout heart, and trusty sword, had rapidly climbed the tree, which he remembered well, since he had in the night alluded to mounted its rugged trunk and caught the secrets of Trovaldo’s conference with Gaspar the Moriscoe. One active bound brought him now on the balcony, and another directly into the chamber. His gleaming sword, his flashing eyes, his hair floating wild on his brow and down to his shoulders, his defenceless person, clad in a plain civilian suit of black — all affected the three observers with various emotions. Van Rozenhoed could not utter a

word, or move a joint. Lyderic's arm fell nerveless by his side. His weapon's point touched the floor ; and Theresa, too, would have sunk on it, had not De Bassenvelt sprung forward, as she reeled towards him with a hysteric scream, and then fell senseless against his breast. While De Bassenvelt clasped her to him, with a force that might have almost strained life into the dead, he called out to Lyderic, —

“ Come on, wretch, and meet your doom ! ”

“ Ivon, I cannot fight with you ! ” was the craven's faint reply. And scarce was it uttered when the secret door beneath the tapestry, of the existence of which he was ignorant, burst open ; and, as if the figures worked on it had started forth in a living metamorphosis, the Moriscoe rushed into the room, while an apparent warrior by his side threw off a plumed helm and discovered the face of Beatrice. Lyderic, with straining eyes fixed on the apparition, was incapable of uttering even a cry for mercy. Both brother and sister with upraised weapons were rushing on him, Gaspar crying out, in allusion to a scene which De Bassenvelt alone understood, —

“ Ah, traitor ! the blow which I struck into this canvass was, then, prophetic ! you die by my arm ! ”

But ere the rapier's point could reach the culprit, De Bassenvelt threw the double shield of his own and Theresa's body before the uplifted arm.

“ Hold ! ” cried he — “ If you love me or your own revenge, strike not ! Let him live in his infamy — death would be too merciful a fate ! ”

Gaspar and Beatrice instantly obeyed ; and, as the former drew the bolts and let in the tide of warriors, the sentence that inflicted life on the miserable wretch was briefly told them.

“ Now quick, my friends, to horse ! ” cried Count Ivon. “ Conduct the father of my bride. — Away, away ! I follow ye ! ”

Van Rozenhoed attempted to stammer some words, but he was seized in the bony arms of Don Diego, and hurried down the staircase. The others lingered awhile, to look on and listen to Lyderic, as he cried with choking voice, —

“ De Bassenvelt, damned De Bassenvelt ! kill me — I defy — I dare you to the deed. Coward, villain ! kill me, Ivon, that I may at least, in dying, have one cause to hate you ! ”

“ On, on, my friends ! ” exclaimed Ivon. “ Leave the re-

creant alone with his remorse!" A shout of laughter from the group made bitter mockery of the caitiff, and in a minute more the palace was utterly deserted, except by its miserable governor. The cavalcade that had performed this daring exploit, swept like a storm-gust through the city. The terrified inhabitants, who had expected to see the whole victorious army rushing in, now discovered that it was a mere handful of men, who had for a while held a hundred thousand in dread. And as some of the most hardy of the armed burghers now stole a glance from the ramparts that commanded the Ostend gate, and overlooked the road towards the battle-field, they saw the black-mailed troop galloping furiously beyond, led by an unarmoured youth, who held before him, on a horse of surpassing beauty and fleetness, a female form that lay like a corpse against his breast.

Flying thus along the causeway, unheeding of the dying or fugitive remains of the vanquished army, De Bassenvelt soon reached the little hamlet of Westende, where Maurice, as before stated, had fixed his quarters for the night. The church door was open, the holy edifice having been appropriated to the reception of the wounded of both armies, who were brought in and attended with indiscriminate care. Into this refuge, amidst groans of suffering, murmurs of despair, and thanksgivings for victory, De Bassenvelt carried Theresa, to whom sensation was once more restored, by the rapid motion of the horse, the night air, and the varied sounds that now broke on her. Her first look of incredulous ecstasy was thrown on De Bassenvelt's face. She gazed a moment—put his flowing curls aside—still held them in her fingers, as though every hair were the clue to a labyrinth of wonder—then pressed her hand to her forehead, as if to condense the scattered fancies of her brain, while his voice murmured such words as these:—

"Yes, yes, my best beloved, it is me—me alone—me, in all forms, all changes, all seasons, thine own! Doubt not the blessed reality of our union, never more to part! Do you not know this voice, these looks—this embrace?"

At the warm pressure of his lips upon her forehead, the tears gushed forth from eyes that could no longer doubt the miracle before them. It was indeed Lambert Boonen, indeed De Bassenvelt, that she gazed on and clung to—each—both—separate—united!

“ No ! ” said she, faintly, yet fervently, “ I will reason no more — but believe it all ! ”

Her father, too, stood by her side ; Beatrice, in her woman’s habit, which the unfeminine armour no longer concealed ; Nona, Count Ivon’s faithful nurse, and Theresa, too, doubly faithful to the cause she had so prudently served ; and he, that strange mysterious monk, Father Wolfert, in his full robes of priesthood, at once acknowledged the father of her lover, the exiled Count Gabriel, the secret visiter of her midnight hours at Welbasch, the assumed representative of the wizard’s ghost, a disguise imagined for the double purpose of his own concealment, and to inspire with supernatural courage the soldiers of his son.

Such was the group that encircled Theresa, and left her no more but her own existence to doubt or marvel at. And as her strength returned, and her confidence rose, and she listened to spoken volumes of explanation compressed into the utterance of minutes, Prince Maurice himself, the glorious conqueror, and his crowd of attendant officers, came in with many a prisoner whose name might have honoured the contract of the noblest marriage.

And what brought now these congregated groups to the altar foot of Saint Simon’s at Westende ? So many of different countries and various creeds ? To witness the solemn knot briefly yet firmly tied by the prior-count, who with his own lips pronounced the nuptial rite.

Theresa, the wildly happy Theresa, had yet very much to learn of all the winding ways that had so long kept her back, but finally led to bliss. Our readers require no explanation. They have not been deceived or doubtful, like our poor, baffled, and bewildered heroine. They have from the first understood the romantic fancy of our *hero*, which would only let him gain his prize through labyrinths of innocent guile and perilous risk, preferring the chance of losing it for ever, to the doubt that it might not be *him*, but his name, his stall, his glory that gained the heart he sought for. His influence on all those who knew and aided his plan has been already told, from the prince to the poor nurse that taught both him and his beloved — one their earliest steps in life. Beatrice’s devotion, that made her whole nature change beneath his power, was not put to any violent proof in her personation of him,

when, mounted on Rolando, whom she could almost manage like his master, she commanded the escort that brought Theresa to Welbasch, and took part in the first sortie from the beleagured castle—or when, sooner than betray Count Ivon's secret, she feigned to represent him in his character of Lambert Boonen, in that desperate moment of the castle's ruin, which had, but for a miracle, been her last.

But we recapitulate too much these never doubtful *secrets*, to which Theresa alone was blind.

One other person attended the marriage, who caused a mingled feeling of surprise and amusement to the rest. This was Cornelius van der Gobble, who came unharmed after the battle from the artificial sand-pit he had so ingeniously made for his safety. Shaking his old friend, Van Rozenhoed, by the hand, and wishing him joy of his daughter's marriage, he gave him from beneath his doublet, where he had faithfully carried them as a sort of under armour, a thick roll of bonds, bills, and other documents, intrusted to his care by Van Rozenhoed, which proved his wealth, in the various companies of Antwerp, Amsterdam, and other towns, to be tenfold his forfeited possessions in Bruges. The vast majority of his original jewels had been thus invested, and had trebled their original worth during twenty years of uninterrupted prosperity. The property in Bruges was therefore abandoned without a sigh—and the Count and Countess De Bassenvelt shared during Siger's life, and divided at his death, a noble fortune. The only condition attached to this inheritance by Van Rozenhoed, was in favour of the coat of arms which he had adopted as his. Count Ivon willingly consented to quarter the gold-beater's *hammer* with his own. He reconciled the apparent degradation to the dignity of his house, by its easily traced connection with the once powerful family of Bovingstier, who bore gules on a band, three mallets in a field argent, as may be seen by a reference to the manuscript of Hermicourt's "Mirror of Nobility," furnished and dated 1398.

Count Gabriel's term of exile expired on the memorable day of his son's marriage, but its results did not advance him a jot nearer the enjoyments of his native country. His hopes of becoming Bishop of Bruges terminated at the same time. The chances of the city ever recovering its liberty were lost

from that moment. And the prior-count, his preferment torn from him, his ambition checked, his patrimony lost, not long survived the final blow to his pride, in the immediate appointment of his old rival, Rodoan de Berleghem, dean of St. Bavan at Ghent, to the episcopal honours which had been the long-sought object of his intrigues.

The family of Claassen, transplanted from Bruges, took rapid root in Holland, where the several sons of old Claas soon caused it to spread in manifold branches of much respectability.

A black marble tablet in the chancel of St. Godule at Brussels, tells that it was stuck up to the memory of Joseph Paul Pointis, Marquess of Assembourg, and of his much beloved wife Marguerite de Lovenskerke, who both died in the year 1617.

Beatrice—whose powerful mind and force of feeling drove her so wide of the true marks of female virtue and discretion, victim of tyranny and baseness, by which she lost the real sense of purity both in religion and morals, but who still, we trust, has not revolted even those whom she could not captivate—saw, in the marriage of De Bassenvelt, the consummation of his happiness and the term of her own. In the pride of her heart she had laboured towards that end, and believed she could bear its accomplishment with stoical calmness. But, no! She was still a woman; and when she saw the ceremony close that bound him to Theresa and severed him from her for ever, she felt a chord snap within her heart, which was never more to be attuned to true delight. But she did not die, the common fate of weaker minds. She summoned her resolution to a long and last farewell of him whom she loved, and her whom in her own despite she envied. Demanding from Prince Maurice a passage for herself and her brother, in one of the many Dutch vessels bound to Africa, they took together their way to that original clime of their unhappy race, in the hope of joining their fate with some of those expatriated tribes, who still cherished the idea of reconquering the Al-puxarras from Spain.

And now we may say farewell to such of our readers as have patiently accompanied us in our long journey, hoping

they may not be startled, nor indisposed towards the true adventures of the next heroine whom we shall offer to their indulgence, by our concluding announcement that she shall be — A DUTCHWOMAN.

NOTE.

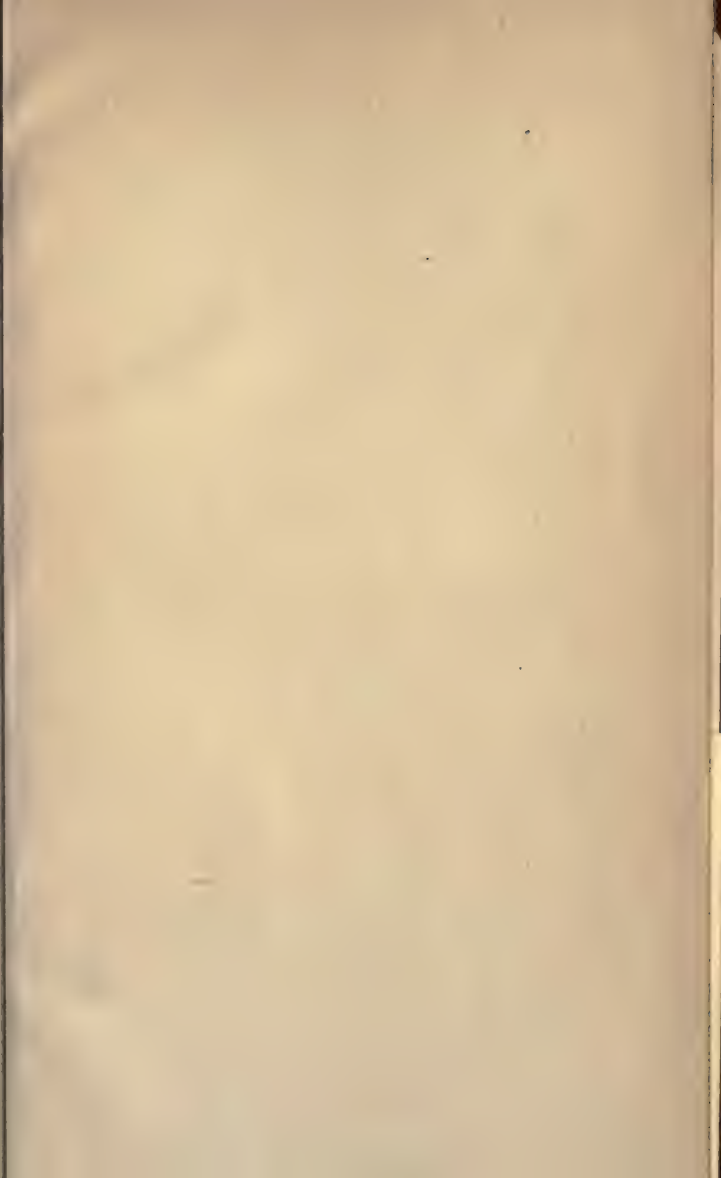
EXPLANATORY postscripts are things to be avoided, when possible ; but I must, on this occasion, get over my aversion to them, and add a page to a book which is, I fear, already perhaps too long. I never happened to read "Old Mortality" till within the last three days, nor did I ever see an extract or hear of the catastrophe of that thrilling performance. My pleasure in perusing its last volume this morning was sorely dashed on finding that the death of Balfour of Burley is, in point of incident, almost precisely similar to that of one of the characters in my present novel. My readers will believe my regret at the risk of having already incurred the double reproach of plagiarism and presumption. They will therefore, I hope, excuse this plea of "not guilty," and take my assertion for proof of innocence, coupled with the recollection that the fate of Martin Schenck is strictly historical, although that of his fellow-sufferer may perhaps only be found in the records to which I had exclusive access. And if my readers acquit me, the author from whom I may seem to have stolen will, I am sure, still more readily do so, should his eye ever glance over this tale. To him I apply no epithet of eulogy ; for praise must rise up before this hierarch of romance as *fade* as the fume of frankincense before some long-accustomed high priest. Such incidents as this may, however, tell him of the deep influence his writings have excited even in those who are not his intentional copyists, but who catch, unknown to themselves, the reflection of his tone, and (if I may so express it) the echo of his imagination. Yet I am not making, in this hurried protest (which I hope will be in time to catch my book yet unpublished in London), a formal disavowal of imitation. I have no dread of incurring that imputation. The best painters and dramatists never shrank from it. They

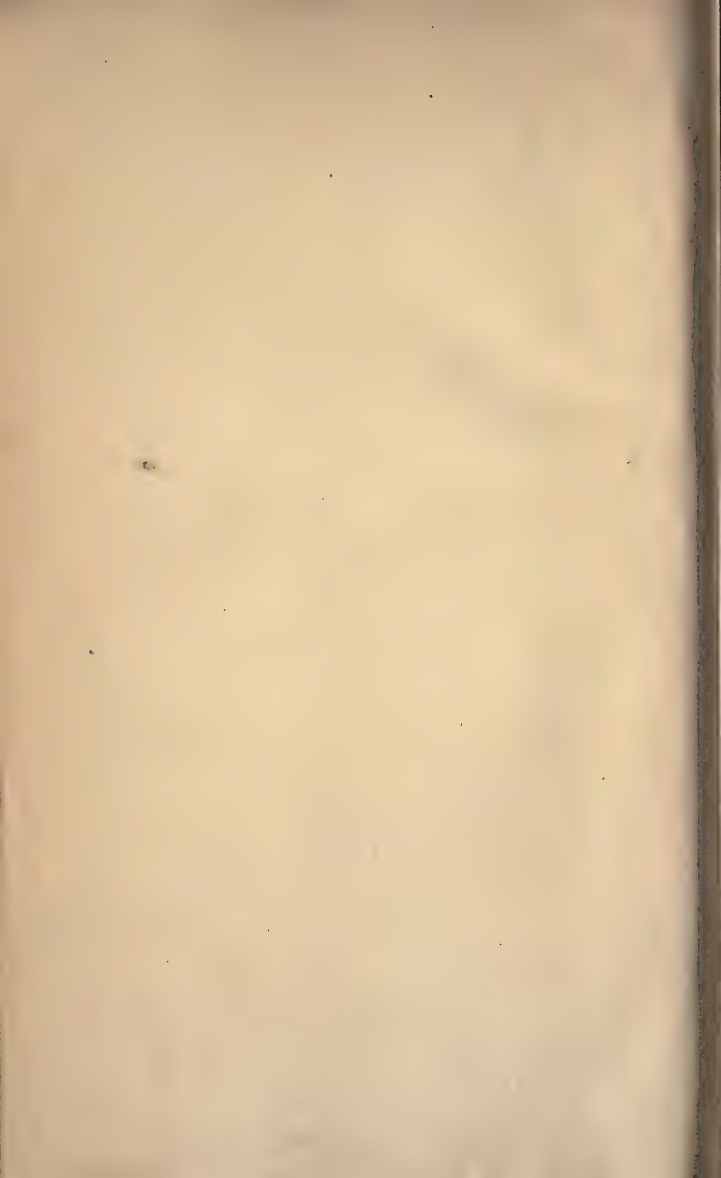
took the same course as the masters they admired, without fear and without servility. Had they *strained* for originality, they had never produced any thing worthy of being copied. The man of any mind will be sure to leave his distinctive imprint on his works, whether they be traced with pen or pencil ; and the great master to whose school he belongs, may be satisfied that the followers who trace his steps have little chance of treading on his heels.

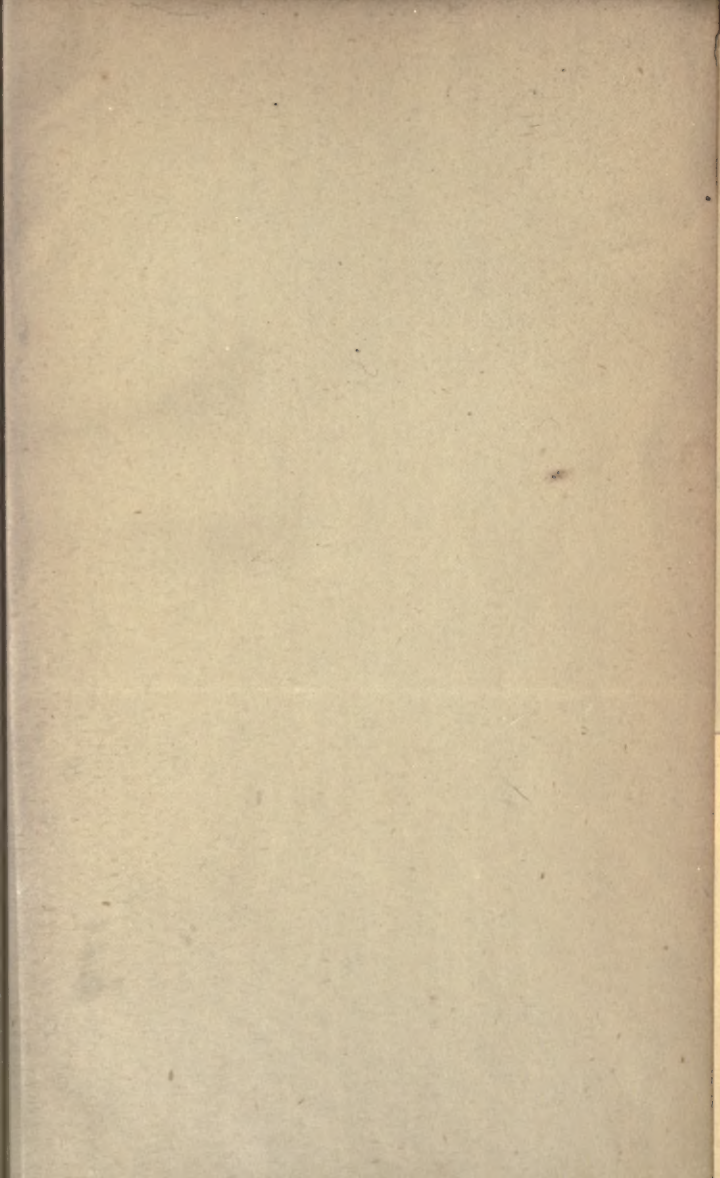
Brussels, July 28. 1830.

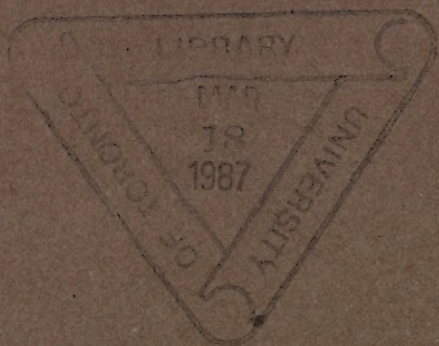
THE END.

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